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RENEWAL FOR THE SMALL-MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

THE YOKED PARISH
RENEWAL FOR THE SMALL-MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

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The purpose of this project was to create a vehicle for renewal in the Pleasant United Methodist Charge Pleasantville, Ohio. This project used the connectional system of the United Methodist Church. The Yoked Parish model of cooperative ministry is a plan to join together a group of churches that share in ministries and communities. There is a twelve week step-by-step journal on how to begin the connectional process. Results of this model were evaluated by a qualitative examining team made up of West Ohio Annual Conference appointed ministers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to many people who have been an inspiration and motivation for me as I answered the call to this study. First and foremost I thank God, who has lead me into the ministry and into this field of ministry. Next I thank my spouse, Frankie Hardman, who gave me incredible support and encouragement as I poured hours of our personal time into this work. I also want to thank my children, Lyndi and Kevin, for allowing me to use some of our "together" time for my studies. A special word of thanks to Tim Lehman, who was appointed to the Union Furnace Church in the midst of my decision to go into the ministry and a member of my peer group. A thank you goes to every person who was a part of my learning experience: Dr. Howard Snyder, Dr. Joe Culumber, David Clarke, Greg Dike, Tim Lehman, Patrick Matolengwe, and Jacob Williams, Jr.; the Newark District Strategy committee and Terry Heck who worked as my context associates; Dr. Harold McSwain, Bob Davis and Sharon Hausman, my consultants, for their words of advice and help in formulating my project; members of the churches I serve on the Pleasant United Methodist Charge who allowed me time and support while accomplishing the project. A thank you to the District Superintendents, Dr. Russell Clark and Jeannette' Cooper, who listened to my theories and theology about Yoked Parish Ministries. I thank God for one of my earliest influences, Don Ogg. Don was an important mentor in my life. I want to thank Don who cared for me and I will never forget his love and kindness. I know God has blessed him and there is a special celebration in heaven for someone who would care for others.

To all of these, and many more people, who prayed, supported and helped me in a special way to make this project possible, I say thank you.

THE YOKED PARISH
RENEWAL FOR THE SMALL-MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Motivation for a Yoked Parish. 1

Self Analysis Summary 1

Context Analysis Summary 9

Foundation for a Yoked Parish 14

II. THEOLOGY OF A YOKED PARISH 18

Valuing the Small-Membership Church 18

Value of Linking Small-Membership Churches 20

Cooperative Parish Ministries 28

Cooperative Ministry and Reconciliation 30

III. STRATEGY FOR SMALL-MEMBERSHIP CHURCH RENEWAL . . 33

Planning 33

Four Step Process of Design 33

Implementation 34

IV. PRESENTATION OF THE YOKED PARISH MODEL 39

V. LEARNINGS FROM THE YOKED PARISH MODEL 43

Learnings 43

Evaluations 46

Chapter

VI. BEYOND THE PROJECT 48

Conclusion 48

Glossary 49

Bibliography 50

VII. APPENDIX 60

1. Journal of Yoked Parish Meetings 60

2 . Multiple-Staff Yoked Parish 66

3. Twelve Week Time Schedule 72

4. Yoked Parish Model 74

5. Parish Council Nomination Forms 85

6. Evaluation of Ministries 90

7. Results of Evaluation 96

8. Overhead Transparencies 102

9. Sermon: *We are One in Salvation* 108

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION FOR A YOKED PARISH

To better understand why there is a desire in my life to work towards a new type of ministry through the Yoked Parish, one must walk with me through my spiritual journey in the small-membership church. To see the small-membership church, as I see it, struggling to find its place in ministry to the world.

Renewal will continue to spread throughout the small-membership church as we share in new forms of ministry that will help us to reach the people of our community. The Yoked Parish is a form of ministry that could help the small-membership church move from a survival ministry to a renewed ministry of outreach.

Come along with me as I share with you my story of growing up in the small-membership church. I will share with you how it has motivated me to search for another form of church renewal and how this ministry has become the main thrust of my calling.

SELF ANALYSIS SUMMARY

In The Beginning

As I grew up in the fundamental faith of my parents, I remember how involved my parents were in the church. My mother enjoyed being active with the youth ministries. My father served as chairperson of the Bus Ministry. My parents made certain their children knew about God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We never missed worship, Bible study, Sunday School or youth meetings, nor would we miss the fun activities of the church. My parents believed that God's love was in all areas of faith and human experience.

With this strong faith background it only seemed appropriate that I went to the altar when I was ten years old. This experience deepened my understanding of faith. I knew there was nothing more important than to have God in my life. This was the

beginning of a journey that would last a life time. There are two important parts to my journey, one part a deepening faith, the other part a widening world experience.

During the summer of 1965 my family moved from our home in a suburb of Columbus to the little town of Union Furnace in the Hocking Hills. The nearest Nazarene Church was in Logan. Our first summer in the Hocking Hills we attended the Nazarene Church in Logan.

When school started, my brothers and I talked my parents into attending the E.U.B. Church in Union Furnace. We became very happy in our new church home. My brothers and I enjoyed going to church with our school friends and my parents were quickly accepted and were involved with many of the church's committees. This became our home church.

I can remember when our church became a United Methodist Church. Our pastor remained the same, the people remained the same, but our name changed. It took many years before some of the people quit calling themselves "former E.U.B.s." It was during this time that I came to realize that God did not care what name we called ourselves, nor do any true Christians. This theological thought remained with me from that moment on.

Before long the excitement of the sixties lured me away from the church. The seventies brought a lot of change to my world. After I graduated from high school, I grew a beard and moved out of my parent's home. I wanted to be on my own, to make a living for myself. I was soon working in the construction field.

Then my life took another turn. In January 1973, I began to date Frankie Rafferty. On August 11, 1973 Frankie and I were married. In November 1973 I left for Vietnam. After my Honorable Discharge from the Navy in 1977, I started a construction business specializing in remodeling and siding. Then one day my whole life changed. While working at a job site I was involved in an accident. I was working on the edge of a roof line when I fell two stories. I landed on a cement patio step, tearing every ligament in my lower back. I was bruised from my shoulder to my knee. I was lucky and did not break

any bones. I spent the next three months healing from that fall. During that time I had a lot of time to think about my life and realized that I was not happy. I wanted more out of life. I was missing something very important, my faith.

I spent many days thinking about my life. Frankie and I talked a lot about who we had become, she a bank officer and I a carpenter, and nothing more. One day we decided to attend our home church at Union Furnace. Our first Sunday was Easter. The moment we walked into the church we knew we were home. It was almost like we had never left.

I had made a long journey in the twenty-five years of my life. It started with the church of my parents, then through the world, with its many temptations, and finally to the church that became my church, the home of my faith. I realized that I was not the same person who started this journey. I had changed. I was not my parents' child believing in their God. I was a child of God, believing through my own faith.

A New Beginning

When I returned to the church, as an adult, I made an important revision in my faith. I realized my faith failed, as a teenager, because it was someone else's faith. I could not be saved by my parents' faith. I had to find my own faith in the salvation of God. My new faith began as a model of my parents' faith and soon was molded into my own basic faith structure, ready to be built upon as I grew in my relationship with God.

A New Journey

I wanted to begin my new journey with a new start. Six months after Easter Morning 1979, I dedicated my life to God. I knew my sins were forgiven and I was ready to serve God . I was then rebaptized, because my first baptism was as an infant and I

wanted to remember my baptism. I was now standing in my own faith in God, saved by Jesus, and ready to be lead by the Spirit.

I learned everything I could about faith and was soon witnessing at work. I was excited about Jesus and wanted to tell everyone about him and his love. I had a new life, thanks to Jesus, and I wanted the whole world to know. Jesus had come into my life and I would never leave him again.

In November of 1979, I had a vision. I found myself standing in a dark void. Then a small light appeared. As it got closer I realized it was Jesus. He walked up to me and showed me that I was to serve God and to worship God. The vision lasted about ten minutes, but I will remember it forever.

I did not fully understand what Jesus was telling me. I struggled with my response to Jesus' calling. How could I serve God? Over the next year I tried to find my calling. I became a Sunday School Superintendent, a teacher, a young adult leader and finally a lay speaker. I felt good about the different leadership roles I had taken within the church, but I was not satisfied. I still needed to find my ministry.

I kept seeking God for an answer to my prayer about my ministry calling. Then one night, as I was sleeping, I had a dream. I was standing in a church. The church was empty, when two men came in. One of them said, "I would like to introduce you to Reverend Hardman." I woke-up immediately. I felt the same inner peace that I felt when I saw Jesus in the vision. I knew Jesus was answering my prayers. He told me how to serve God. I was called to be a minister.

Tim Lehman was appointed to the Union Furnace Church in the midst of my decision to go into the ministry. Tim helped me to start the process towards the ordained ministry. He set up meetings with the District Superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry. But Tim did something more important than these meetings, he gave me the opportunity to preach. I was the lay speaker to help him on the Union Furnace Charge. I began to preach to two of the five churches every Sunday, until I was appointed to my

first charge. I had almost a year of experience before I was appointed to a four church charge. This experience helped me to prepare for a multiple-church charge. In February 1981, I had answered the call of ministry, but I had not satisfied the requirements to be ordained in the United Methodist Church of the West Ohio Conference.

I was willing to sacrifice everything for God. I sold my business and home. We moved into an old parsonage and I started college. To make it financially, I was paid a minimum wage, used the G.I. Bill to pay for school, and Frankie continued to work at the Citizens Bank of Logan. It was hard to adjust to the loss of my larger income and the added cost of college.

Frankie and I had been married over ten years when we were able to have a child. We had gone through a lot of medical exams and tests just to have a child. Then God blessed us with a daughter. We named her Lyndi Lea, which means *Beautiful Meadow Dweller*. She always reminds me of how good God is.

During my first appointment my father died with Leukemia cancer. He died in October, 1982. Before he died, my father and I had a special day together. My father told me about his calling into the ministry. He felt he was called by the Lord to serve God but he could not leave his work to go into the ministry. His Bus Ministry became his service to God. My father had prayed that one of his sons would go into the ministry. He knew, when one of his sons would answer the calling, his ministry would be complete. I could tell he was happy and ready to be with God. I have thanked God, over and over, that my father and I had that day together.

I served the Haydenville United Methodist Charge for five years. During this time I was able to complete my Bachelor's Degree in Communications from Ohio University. I was appointed to the Corning United Methodist Parish as I started my seminary education, in 1985.

A New Journey of Knowledge

My seminary experience began four and a half years after my first appointment. I had completed a Bachelor's Degree, with Honors, and worked through many of the "firsts" of ministries. I had counseled, married, and buried people from all areas of life. I had a working knowledge of ministry before I attended the Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

As I entered into seminary, my first course helped me to realize that I was not as prepared for theological studies as I had thought. I had been serving churches with the same type of theological background as my own. I had not been challenged to prove my theological stance. Once the studies of seminary began to challenge me, I found new meanings within my theology.

When I found the scripture challenging my theology, I learned how to form a deeper understanding through the scripture. I developed a deeper, stronger, and more of a complete theological package than I had ever had before. Seminary could not shake my faith, but it gave me a better understanding of the usage of my faith. I came to realize that no one could be on my faith journey but me. I also could not be on someone else's journey. Seminary helped me to learn how to walk with others on their journey of faith, while I continued on my own journey.

The liberating theology of seminary was a good addition to my ever widening conservative theology. I feel I am a better minister and servant of God because of the development of my faith through this seminary experience. I felt well prepared to go into the ordained ministry.

As my seminary years came to an end, I was appointed to a newly formed federated parish. There I was to serve a United Methodist Church and two Presbyterian Churches. It was one of the hardest challenges I had to go through. I had to align two theologies into a working theology for the three churches. I used every bit of my seminary education to bring the two denominations together. We did a lot of trial and error. After

two years we had formed a working charge. Once this work was complete, I would be appointed to another church.

While in Amesville, at the Federated Yoked Cooperative Parish, Frankie and I decided to adopt a child. We felt a need to adopt a child to make our family complete. We spent a year in group meetings and other forms of education. Then one day the phone call came. Our case worker had a child for us, a little boy. We meet Kevin the day before his fourth birthday. Within the week Kevin was living in our home. Kevin had a hard start in life, but was now our child. Kevin has grown into a nice young man and most people cannot tell that he was adopted. We know the Lord sent Kevin to us. It has been very difficult, but he also reminds me that God is so good.

After I was ordained Elder, I was appointed to the Pleasantville United Methodist Church. This appointment was to a church that had become split. A group of the members were meeting at the Grange Hall. My task was to bring these two groups back together. Prior to my appointment, a retired minister was placed in the church to begin its reconciliation. We worked together to become a new church, with a difficult background. After four years, the church is beginning to heal from its split.

After the church had worked through a lot of the reconciliation process, it was placed on a charge with another church. The main reason for this alignment was to keep the appointment at a full time ministry. The church has learned to be flexible and include another congregation within its ministry. In the last four years the Pleasantville Church has come a long way in its concept of ministry and its witness as a church controlling its own ministries.

A Journey of Experiences

My faith journey has taught me many valuable lessons. Each church has its own needs and problems. All they need is a goal, a sense of where they are going and how they are serving God. Each of the charges had a unique problem. Each one needed to find their ministry, but each one seemed to be stuck in its past. Some of the most often heard phrases were, "We used to do it this way," or "We never did it that way." Throughout my years of ministry, I have discovered a misconception in this type of thinking. If we try to be the way we once were, we are already defeated. Jesus told us, in a parable, about living in our past. His warning comes in Luke 9:62:

> No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God. (NIV)

Many of our Appalachian churches live this type of ministry. Many were built as a town was growing and began to decline as the "Boom-Time" ended. One example is an eighteen member church that meets in a two hundred member sanctuary, and all they talk about is when the sanctuary used to be full.

I feel that God has given me the gifts of preaching and reconciliation. I live for the proclamation of the Good News, and to see the church overcome its problems through ministry. During my appointment at the Amesville Federated Charge, we were often in discussion about the difference of theology and ministry within the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church. The two years that I served there were filled with meetings as we created this new charge. It is still a charge after five years of ministry together.

At Pleasantville United Methodist Church, we have overcome many barriers. The two sides of the split are now ministering with each other. Their ministry has gone from a

self-healing ministry to an outreach ministry. On Sunday mornings, two major parts of the split sit on the same pew. The split will always be remembered, but it is becoming their history and not their future. I never hear what "we used to do" in our committee meetings any more.

Both appointments were great lessons about church renewal. Both could have retreated to their past, but they decided to meet their future head on. They were willing to make some changes. I do not know where the two charges might go in their service to God. In Pleasantville there is a potential for growth. After years of decline, we are experiencing two years of solid growth. First it was in attendance, then in membership. Every once in a while someone will talk about the past, only in disbelief.

My journey is an ongoing journey. I know God has called me to serve the church. I know God will give me the gifts I will need. I have put my hands to the plow and will not look back.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Looking Over Their Shoulder

The community of Pleasantville started as a camp site in 1803.[1] Abraham Bope located this site six miles north of Lancaster, Ohio. After the first winter, he was joined by four other families. The camp site finally became a community after a considerable colony settled in the neighborhood. These first few years were very difficult. The roads were little more than blazed paths.[2] Sometimes it would take two days to travel from Lancaster to the new settlement. There were still Indian hunting squads in the Pleasant Township area. Sometimes they would camp near the settlement, and the young people would go to watch them sing and dance.[3]

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1 *The History of Fairfield County, Ohio* The Statement of Jacob Bope, of Pleasant Township, 199

2 Ibid., 199 3 Ibid., 199

Two areas of their community were very important. The first was schooling. Before 1810, there had been two school teachers in the settlement.[4] The first was a German teacher. Then an English teacher came and set up school on the Newark road. Pleasantville would become well known for the schools founded in its community.

The second important part of its community was its organized religions.[5] The first preacher was the Rev. Stake of the Lutheran denomination. Soon the Methodists and Albrights began their work. They would hold camp-meetings every year, many being held in the cabins of the settlers.[6]

Between 1811 and 1830, the Methodist Episcopal Church had extended itself so much that several circuits had to be formed. The Fairfield Circuit was one of them. At the close of these nineteen years, the membership of the Fairfield Circuit was 1,276[7]. It was at this time the Pleasantville M. E.. Church was to form. It had been a strong class and was now ready to become a church.

In 1849, a small Church building was erected on Walnut Street in the new addition of Pleasantville. Records are not very clear, but there were about thirty members when the Methodist Episcopal Church became the second denomination to settle into the community of Pleasantville. Soon after the M. E. Church was built, the Methodist Protestant Church began to have tent meetings and revivals. Soon a class was formed and a church building erected. By 1850 there were three churches in Pleasantville: the Lutheran, the Methodist Episcopal, and the Methodist Protestant. During this time, it was reported that the churches were full every Sunday and during any revival.

In 1879, the Methodist Episcopal Church had outgrown its first building. A new building was erected by 1883, at 112 Lincoln Avenue across the road from the Fairfield Union Academy. It was the biggest and nicest church building in Pleasantville and the

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4 Ibid., 201 5 Ibid., 201
6 Ibid., 201 7 Ibid., 123

surrounding communities. By the turn of the century, Pleasantville had become a two-church town: the Methodist Episcopals, which ministered to the upper class of Pleasantville, and the Methodist Protestants, which ministered to the lower class of Pleasantville.

The town was at its greatest during the early years of this century. At this time there were many businesses and opportunities for employment. The Glass Factory was one of the reasons Pleasantville was growing so quickly. By 1910, there were 608 people living in Pleasantville. There was also a grist mill and many farms surrounding the town. There was a Hardware, Grocery Store, Pharmacy and Soda Shop, Barber Shop and Beauty Shop, two buggy repair shops (both became service stations), a Funeral Home, and many other businesses. The town was on the cutting edge of the 20th century.

Suddenly a disaster happened. The glass plant burned down. It was gone in one night in September of 1912.[8] The town was devastated. Many people became unemployed, and soon left Pleasantville for other employment. By 1920, the population of Pleasantville had dropped to 479. The town had changed forever.

The churches became the mainstay of the people. Exact membership rolls could not be found, but Ed Wildermuth remembers people sitting in the windows for the worship services. Ed's father owned the Hardware and had extended credit, or gave people what ever they could so the people of Pleasantville would not go hungry. The churches grew in number of attendance, with most of the attendees looking for religious support. They needed to know God was with them and the church helped as much as they could.

By 1930, Pleasantville was beginning to recover from the disaster. The population of the town grew to 495. There were other stores and businesses coming into town and the main road between Lancaster and Pleasantville had been upgraded to a state road. Pleasantville was now connected to the world. Pleasantville was forever changed.

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8 Lancaster Eagle-Gazette (Ohio) , 28 September 1912.

The churches in Pleasantville were filled every Sunday during the Twenties and Thirties. The M. E.. Church did major construction on their building in 1929. The church building was raised four feet and a basement was added. This greatly modernized the church. The construction included rest rooms, a furnace room, and a kitchen. The M.P. Church also added a basement in the early thirties.

With both churches doing so well, they decided to remain two Methodist Churches when the M. E. and M. P. churches united into the Methodist Church in 1939. The M. P. church became the Walnut St. Methodist Church, while the M. E. Church became the Lincoln Ave. Methodist Church. They continued their ministries to the different classes of people in Pleasantville.

The church and town continued to grow. Now people were commuting to Lancaster for work, but lived in Pleasantville because of its community life. People could drive to Lancaster or take the train to Columbus or other close communities. This growth continued at a steady pace into the Sixties. In 1960 the population had grown to 741, and the Lincoln Ave. Methodist Church had a membership of 261. The church completed another building project in the late fifties. They added six classrooms onto the rear of the church. In 1960 the church was at its largest.

The Sixties was a very hard time on the community of Pleasantville. Many of the businesses in town were moving into Lancaster or closing up. The next generation was looking to the larger cities for the excitement of the Sixties. Pleasantville was experiencing a loss of growth within its community. After growing by one hundred and twenty-three people in the Fifties, the population grew only by thirteen in the Sixties. The town was not the only area affected by this decline. The two Methodist Churches were affected greatly. They were losing the young adults and teenagers at an alarming rate.

In 1968, when the United Methodist Church was formed, the two Methodist Churches of Pleasantville came to an agreement to unite into one church. The two congregations became one and used the Lincoln Ave. church as their place of worship.

Some of the Walnut St. Methodist did not agree with the merger of the two congregations, so they left the church and started a new congregation in the Walnut St. building. It became a Church of Christ in Christian Union. It has survived, but has never became more than the church of a few families who were alienated from the United Methodist movement. Another church opened its doors during this time. The Church of the Nazarene started a congregation in the late Fifties but it also has remained a small family church within the community.

The churches of Pleasantville suffered great loss during the Sixties. The Nazarene and the Church of Christ in Christian Union had membership totals of approximately fifty members each. The newly formed Pleasantville United Methodist Church saw its combined membership drop to 304, during the first year of their merger.

The seventies was a decade of small growth for Pleasantville. It had become a bedroom community for Lancaster and Columbus. People lived in Pleasantville while working in Lancaster and Columbus. More businesses left the small community for the larger urban areas. Pleasantville's population grew by twenty six people in the Seventies, while the Pleasantville United Methodist Church membership dropped to 255. The church membership was declining, even while the town's and township's populations were slowly growing.

The Eighties brought some important changes to Pleasantville. A Senior Citizens apartment building and a low-income housing development was constructed. The town's population jumped to 926 by 1990. There was new construction within the township. Two subdivisions were built within three miles of Pleasantville.

The Eighties were very difficult on the church. With a population that was becoming older and lower in income, the church found itself struggling, for the first time, financially. A member died and left the church enough money to vinyl side and air condition the church, but they were struggling with apportionments and other related expenses.

Then everything exploded. In 1987, a minister was appointed who had a different theology than the older, more fundamental members of the church. By 1989, there had become a split within the church. The members who were against the teachings of the pastor left the church. Some left and attended other churches, but the real problem began when a group left and started their own church in the local Grange Hall. They called themselves members of the church but would not attend while the pastor remained at the Pleasantville Church.

The Bishop reappointed the pastor and an agreement was reached and the church was reunited in January, 1990. Two retired ministers were appointed to serve the church until the Annual Conference of 1990. When the membership roll was updated for 1990 there were only 223 members in the church. But the membership count continued to drop for years after the split. In 1993, the membership had dropped to 194.

I was appointed to the Pleasantville United Methodist Church at the Annual Conference of 1990. I was to help mend the hurt that had happened during the split. My background had been with churches that had gone through splits, were on multiple church charges, and were of different denominations working to come together as a single appointment. It was the beginning of a difficult time for the church. It was time to stop looking at the past, and look together at the future.

FOUNDATION FOR A YOKED PARISH

This style of ministry setting will be a combination of two basic types of ministerial setting already being used. The first comes from the need of the small-membership church and cooperative parish ministry. The second comes from the strength of multiple staff ministerial setting.

This type of small-membership church renewal would help the small-membership church regain its identity as a church in ministry and not just a church surviving. The small

church has been seen as a congregation that could only be served by someone just starting or ending their ministry. Too often, when a church needs strength to be in ministry, it is appointed a minister with little experience or a minister with a lot of experience but reduced work ability as he or she moves toward retirement.

If neither the conference nor district will tell the small-membership church that their ministry is important, how long do we think they can continue in ministry? Wesley used small class meetings to check the fever of the children of God. If we check the small-membership church to see the fever of the United Methodist denomination we might begin to understand why the denomination is losing its members. Turn up the fever in the small church by showing the church we believe in the ministry of when "two or three are gathered." By changing the spirit of the small-membership church we can change the spirit of the ministry within it. The appointment to a Yoked Parish is not a punishment but a new ministry of renewal.

The Yoked Setting

The parish will be formed with the help of a survey of ministry. The survey will get to the heart of the vision of the church in a yoked setting. The survey will help us to understand the theology of the church. It is not necessary for each church in a yoked parish to have the same theology but it helps to understand where reconciliation ministry will be needed.

Formation of the parish will consider geographical locations of each church. Main roads, connecting the church to the parish, and natural land contours will be important aspects to be considered. If there is a major difference in geographic locations there might be a hidden barrier to a cooperative parish. An on-site knowledge of the parish is needed to give the best assessment.

Community needs and availability to main urban areas will also be important to the yoked parish. If a church uses a different community, than the rest of the parish, it could make cooperation more difficult. It would not keep a church from becoming a part of a parish. It would add new dynamics to the yoked ministries of the parish that would have to be considered.

Another aspect of community would be local school district boundaries. If there is tension within the school districts it could change the dynamics of the parish. Such things as sport-rival schools, or county competitive schools could become a major barrier to deal with. The best setting for a parish would be to have each church within the same school district. The next best setting would have the parish within two completely separate types of school districts.

With all these considerations in mind the final influence upon the parish will be the financial package for the ministerial appointment. Cost of ministry and availability of support will help determine the total number of churches assigned to a parish. This will not outweigh the above mentioned needs and considerations but will always be an important consideration.

Multiple-Staff Ministry

The ministerial appointments will be made to the parish. The conference and districts need to view the parish as a single appointment with multiple congregations. They will work as a staff ministry to each church and not to a specific church/es. There will be a senior pastor and a predetermined number of associate pastor/s for each parish. The ministerial work load will be assigned by the gifts of the ministers appointed to the parish.

The senior pastor will be the administrator and the supervisor/mentor of the associate pastor/s of the parish. This pastor will be responsible for preaching, parish and church council meetings, the committees of the trustees, P.P.R.C., parish ministry work

areas and parish coordination. As supervisor/mentor to the associate pastor/s there would be regular staff meetings to keep coordination among the pastors and any laity staff of the parish. The senior pastor would also be responsible to mentor the associate pastor/s and to help guide and nurture the gifts and talents of the pastors of the parish.

The associate pastor/s appointment will be to the parish. The need of the parish will determine the ministerial work areas assigned to each pastor. Such areas of ministry could include youth ministry, visitation ministry, preaching and parish coordination ministry.

Parish Settings

Each parish would have its own style of cooperation among the churches assigned to the parish. The number of churches in a parish will be determined by the aspects listed in the first section. There could be as few as two and upwards of ten churches appointed to a yoked parish. Once the number of churches have been determined, the staff is then set. The parish setting will be the final influence determining the size of the staff.

The appointment of the experienced elder is the first step in establishing the ministerial staff. The level of ministry needed to minister to the churches of the parish will determine the qualifications of the associate ministers. My vision is to have at least one student minister on the parish. This will help to build our pool of experienced elders for future appointments to the multi-staff yoked parishes.

I believe that churches and ministers alike will look upon the yoked parish ministry in a new way. It will not be a punishment nor a sign of survival when churshes and/or ministers are a part of the multi-staff yoked parish. Both, churches and ministers, will find themselves in the midst of a revival; the renewal of the small-membership church.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGY OF A YOKED PARISH

As a United Methodist, I understand our obligation to God and Jesus Christ as a calling to be a faithful witness to the church's life and ministries. To do this faithfully, we must consider the theological affirmations of the children of God and the body we call the church. The church comes in many forms and in many sizes. I believe we are called to be in ministry to every church.

Jesus did not set a standard for the size of a church. Jesus valued every gathering of the church. He preached in the small synagogues throughout Israel. He would stop to minister to just one person or thousands. Some of Jesus' best known ministries happened in small gatherings. Jesus often separated his disciples from the crowds to teach them and prepare them for ministry. Jesus told the disciples he sent before him into the villages, to stay in their homes and teach the people of the community. With the smaller numbers, hearing the teachings of Jesus, there was a stronger sense of community.

VALUING THE SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

Jesus wanted the disciples to understand to value each time the church came together. Jesus told the disciples about this fellowship.

> Matthew 18:19-20
> Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

The small-membership church is still the church, even when a few people are all that attend its worship service. When the church is involved within a community the population size of that community will help determine the membership size of that congregation.

Throughout the Bible the church has met in many forms, from large mountain-top experiences to the small group experiences. As the church began to form and grow in the New Testament times it was the small cluster of believers, which met in homes and small buildings, that helped the church find its way throughout the world.

When Paul began his missionary work, he used simple places to start a church. Once the community began to accept the teachings of Jesus the house church was formed. Paul often responded to these small community churches in his writings. They were the strength of his ministry and the vision of the future church.

> Romans 16:5
> Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
>
> I Cor. 16:19
> The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquilla and priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.
>
> Col. 4:15
> Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in their home.
>
> Philemon 1:2
> to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home.

The churches that were small and personal in their ministry were the very church Paul saw as a great form of ministry and mission. Paul encouraged the small house church to be ever faithful throughout it's ministry.

When John Wesley began the Methodist Movement in England he realized a need to keep the societies small and manageable. Within four months the society grew to fifty-six. Wesley divided the society into "bands" of five to ten members.[9] This small group arrangement worked well as Wesley checked the temperature of his followers. As

Methodism continued to grow and new buildings were needed for the new societies, Wesley realized a need to divide the new societies into "classes" of twelve people.[10] Once Wesley saw the "unspeakable usefulness" of this arrangement the bands became less important than the classes. Wesley continued to realize the most effective ministry was accomplished in the smaller group.

In the early years of American Methodism, a class could be started in any community where they could get enough members. These classes would be joined together on a circuit. A preacher would be assigned to ride the circuit. Once a class would grow large enough to become two or more classes it could register as a chartered church. American Methodist Churches started to grow in every little town and throughout the countryside in the new areas of the United States.

Methodism grew rapidly in the wilderness and new towns because there was real value placed on these small-membership churches. The laity was given real leadership within their church. Lay members and preachers were expected to be committed to their faith and calling.

Today we need to express the value of the small-membership church. These churches are still calling their lay members and preachers to be committed to their faith in Christ Jesus, often being the teaching churches for Methodist ministers. Many of the small-membership churches take pride in teaching the young or inexperienced preachers.

VALUE OF LINKING SMALL-MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES

As small-membership churches began to see a special need for ministries within their community and nation, they began to realize how they might combine their efforts and accomplish greater ministries with each other. This is not to say the small-membership

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9 Stanley Ayling; John Wesley, 1979 Abington Press, Nashville, 96
10 Ibid., p. 132

church could not accomplish a ministry on its own, but with other churches the small-membership church does not have to lower its goals because of its size.

We might come to an understanding of why we link churches together from our own traditions and solutions to community needs. I believe these traditions spoke loudly of the needs of the cooperative parish and how it has served the people of God in different eras of time.

The Early Church;

> *And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.* (Acts 2:44-45)

Early Church Leaders[11];

> Tertullian: *We are a body knit together by the bond of piety, by unity of discipline and by the contract of hope. There can only be one church spread throughout the world.*
>
> Hilary of Potiers: *The church is the harmonious fellowship of the faithful. Its unity is of a single integrated body, not an aggregation of assorted bodies.*
>
> Augustine: *It is not a case of his* (Christ) *being one and our being many, but we who are many are a unity in him.*

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11 Henry Bettenson, ed. The Early Christian Fathers, 1956, 7th Edition 1984 Oxford University Press, Oxford

Methodist Tradition[12];

John Wesley: *It is only when we are knit together that we have nourishment from him, and increase with the increase of God.* Wesley believed in cooperation through mutual encouragement and service within the context of grace. The "connectional system" of organization unifies each local church in mission, ministry and service.

Circuit-riding tradition: Congregations share the service of one local or ordained pastor who is assisted by lay speakers/leaders in meeting the needs of local churches and communities.

United Methodist Discipline: II 206; Local churches, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may enhance their witness to each other and to the world by showing forth the love of Jesus Christ through forms of mutual cooperation.

A personal view of cooperative ministries come from those who have seen it work in the heart and soul of our communities that are strongly affected by the size of their community and church. In the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church we find it the most in the churches of the Athens and Portsmouth Districts. What are the views of the churches and District leadership on the cooperative type of ministry;

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12 Albert C. Outler, John Wesley, 1964, paperback 1980 Oxford University Press , New York

A Superintendent's view of cooperative ministry:

Benjamin Edwards: He served the Athens District of the West Ohio Conference. Through his experience with many cooperative parishes he wrote about some obvious benefits (Appalachian Development Committee, U. M. C., 1992).

1. *Morale levels rise with laity and clergy alike as they begin to work cooperatively, suddenly realizing, "We are not alone."*
2. *Church programs get better. Things are dreamed of and tackled collectively which no single church would dare to do.*
3. *Resources are found collectively which are nonexistent individually.*
4. *The clergy share the work load. In this way a team ministry arrangement akin to a large city church model becomes possible.*
5. *Connectionalism begins to be modeled and appreciated at the grass roots level.*

A Superintendent's "Whys" of cooperative ministry;

James Waugh:(Appalachian Development Committee, U. M. C., 1992)

First of all, cooperative parish development is a way of doing ministry. It is not just another layer of administration. Secondly, together churches can carry out ministries that are better done together than alone. Smaller membership churches remain a viable ministry, is a third reason for cooperation. Churches are not in survival style ministries. A fourth reason

for cooperative ministries is the involvement of the laity. This leads to a covenantal style of ministry. Finally, cooperative ministries offers a way for Christians to witness to their unity in Christ while maintaining the identity of their local congregations.

My own theology of the cooperative parish comes from my own faith in the ministry of a few faithful people serving God within the larger community by their commitment to the community of believers. My theology is born out of the importance of Appalachian ministry where people who worship together need to know the person they worship with by name. They not only share their faith but also their existence within the larger community. People that worship in a small-membership church choose that church for a specific reason, it is family. Today these family churches need to share the ministry of their community with each other. They will not give up their "church" because it is the home of their faith. We need to value the ministries and faithfulness of the people who live their faith within the small-membership church.

My understanding of this theology of the small-membership church was developed with the insight of serving in four different church appointments, where each church was involved in some form of cooperative ministry. It is easy to say why it is best to have churches serving within the cooperative parish when I look at the churches from the administrative view, but what do we hear from the people directly involved in the cooperative ministries?

To understand the importance of the church to the families and communities of the people of Appalachia, one must understand the people and their faith. Through their theology we can understand the faith that keeps small-membership churches dotting the hillsides.

THE PEOPLE

Tex Sample's *Hard Living People & Mainstream Christians*[13] is a good source of information about the type of people who live in Appalachia U.S.A. Each chapter opens a new understanding of people who live an existence-type lifestyle.

Growing up in the Appalachian foothills one learns quickly the very hard lessons of life. The life style is abusive at its best times. Children begin working on the family farm at a very early age and will often continue to work the family farm until they turn old or die, which ever comes first. My family did not have a farm but I was expected to work for hire to the farmers of the community from the ninth grade on. By the time school was out in May I had already earned my first pay of the summer working season. I would work twenty to thirty hours each week for the farmers who would hire me and then come home and do my chores. I did not have as many chores as some of my friends did, but I was usually working long after it had become dark.

The most important resource in Appalachia U.S.A. is the work of the people as they scratch out a way of life. A person could have many faults but if he or she is a hard worker they have the support of their peers.

This work ethic also was a rule of measurement for the spiritual leaders. The church had to be responsible for the work it was assigned to perform. Mostly it was to keep the women of the community involved in mission to each other. If one family had a need the other families would come to help through Christian giving.

The ministers and churches are held to that same work ethic. While growing up I have seen many ministers do manual labor. Mostly it was because the man of the house had been unable to do the work, maybe because of sickness, overtime work at the factory, or the demands of the fields needing planted or harvested.

As a minister from the Southeastern Region of Ohio, I have also been expected to

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13 Tex Sample, Hard Living People & Mainstream Christians, 1993 Abingdon Press Nashville

have this type of work ethic. One day I was called to help in the fields of one of my parishioners. It was because one of his sons had been sick and they had fallen behind in their harvest. I put in a twelve-hour day to help a family that was depending on the crop to see them through the next year. When there was work to be done on the church building the minister was expected to be there swinging a hammer, using a shovel, or what ever he or she was capable of doing.

I still become involved in community needs. I work at the school in our community, I attend community meetings, and still look for people who need special help to make a living. I have taken a generator to our shut-ins during an ice storm when the electricity was out for a week. We could keep their freezer and refrigerator working and would run their water pump to refill their water tanks for personal hygiene.

With this type of work ethic the church continues to find itself in an unusual circumstance. It must remain a certain size to fulfill the needs placed upon it. If it became something the people could not use it would soon be abandoned, nothing more than a building taking up precious crop space.

THEIR FAITH

As written earlier, Appalachian's faith had to be a working relationship with the church, minister and God. It had to be something simple, easy to maintain and very productive. The church in Appalachia U.S.A. has a basically ultra-conservative or fundamental Christian theology. What I mean by this is most of the hard-working and hard-living people take the Bible as a literal understanding of God. If it is not in the Bible it does not exist or it is not a faith issue.

An example of the importance and power of a fundamental theology can be seen in one simple experience I had with a good-hearted, hard-living person. He had to quit school in the eighth grade when his father died from a heart condition. He became the

head of the house and went to work, ten to twelve hours a day, to send his younger brothers and sisters to school. He owned his own business with a fleet of six trucks. His faith allowed him to have a work ethic that told him "God would help him to prosper."

One Sunday morning, as I read the Gospel text, I read from the New International Version and not from the King James Version. After the worship service he asked me why I read from *that other Bible?* When I explained that it was easier for people to understand he replied with this statement, *We should read the Bible in the language Jesus spoke in. So if King James was good enough for Jesus it is good enough for us.*

After explaining that Jesus did not speak in any form of English, not King James English nor the International English, but spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew, he accepted my use of the New International Version.

The faith in the Appalachian areas of our country and state requires a special type of nurture and care. Their faith came out of hearing the word spoken more than read. As in my previous example, many people had a limited education. With this special need, of a more personal ministry, the demands on the minister are more demanding with each parishioner. So the need of this type of life-style causes the Appalachian church to remain small. If the denomination continues to overlook the small-membership church, many people who need faith in a more personal way will be lost.

To understand my faith one must understand the basic concept of the Appalachian theology. It does not matter what I add to my wisdom, faith or theological thinking. The small-membership church is where I first experienced Christ Jesus in my life and will always be the heart of my faith.

COOPERATIVE PARISH MINISTRIES

As Christians serving out God's call to minister to the needy, to those who need to hear the word of God, we need to turn away from the thought that church renewal means growth in numbers only. We have been losing members faster than we can gain new ones because of the theology behind church size and ministry importance. We need to look at the location and type of culture a church is located within to determine how big a church might grow. Once we teach our leaders to understand that church renewal is about spirituality and growth from within, the church will begin to grow in ministry and then by its membership size.

I see the renewal of the small-membership church in a way that will connect the smaller churches in cooperative parishes, similar to the early Wesleyan movement which included bands, classes and parishes. This is not only a concept for small group ministries with a large church, it is also a concept of personal and family types of communities of faith. Instead of having each church being on its own, to sink or swim, they will be connected together. The cooperative parish is the body of the church with each congregation being the class, band or small group living out their faith.

A Scriptural example of this type of relationship among churches is in 2 Corinthians 9. An offering was taken to support other new and smaller churches. We need to become stronger in our connectionalism in the body of Christ. We are connected in the body of Christ as Paul writes to the church in Corinth.

> 1 Cor. 12:12-27
> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. [13] For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
> [14] Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. [15] If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. [16] And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? [18] But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every

one of them, just as he wanted them to be. [19] If they were all one part, where would the body be? [20] As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

[21] The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" [22] On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, [24] while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, [25] so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. [26] If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

[27] Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

We need to rethink our theology about the small-membership church in our denomination. We can survive without it, but we will never be the church we have been called to be.

As the church we need to minister as the people of God and to offer Christ to the church, to the lost children of God and to the world separated from God because of sin. If the church as a whole does not take on the responsibility of all its members, then the body of Christ will continue to shrink.

There may be a need to close a church, now and then, when the community dies around it. But when a church fails because we did not nurture it, as a part of the body of all churches, then only we are to blame. We worry about building new congregations, especially the Mega-Church, and forget to strengthen the spirituality and ministry of the congregations that have been built by the love and faith of its members.

So to keep the small church that is so important to Appalachia people and church growth in the areas of the Mega-Church, we hear the calling of unity. We find this oneness within our faith to God and our fellowship with each other. True cooperative ministries begin with the unity of service as the full body of Christ.

COOPERATIVE MINISTRY AND RECONCILIATION

To make a cooperative parish, the congregations must be able to be a part of the universal church. But we are often divided by our community and cultural differences. To overcome these differences we must be in a ministry of reconciliation. We must seek out and use ways to bring us closer together as God's people.

To see the effect of reconciliation on the congregations of God's holy church we need to have an understanding of reconciliation. Reconciliation is the changing of the relationship between God and humankind. It not only involves the relationship between God and an individual, but also involves the relationship between God and the church, and between the congregations of the church. We find this definition of reconciliation in II Corinthians 5:11-6:2;

2 Cor. 5:11-6:2

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. [12] We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. [13] If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. [14] For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. [15] And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

[16] So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. [21] God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[6:1] As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain [2] For he says,

"In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

As a church grows, declines, or finds itself in a new form of ministry it will need to keep reconciliation in its ministry; to keep God before the people who have given up hope, who have lost their way in life, or have separated themselves from God and church.

Reconciliation is not a product of the cooperative ministry, but is the unifying force within it. Without the desire to become a child of God, the people have lost their spirituality and hope of salvation. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, we also need to keep from letting the worldly ways from controlling the church and the people of God.

We need to remember that reconciliation is not a singular act of ministry. It is the fundamental action of God's people found in every part of our Christian faith.

Reconciliation And The Cooperative Parish

We use reconciliation as a central focus point of cooperative ministry. We see Christ in the midst of our ministry when we use reconciliation as a way to find unity among the people of God. If we use the example from Paul's letter we will find a new direction of ministry within our community. We will be offering Christ, not just as a means of salvation, but as a new relationship between God's people and their church. If we remember that Jesus died for all people and all people who believe in Jesus' death and resurrection are now reconciled to God, is it not much more appropriate for the church to find a way of bringing the people of God together through a cooperative ministry?

I believe it is. I believe true reconciliation is the cause of cooperative ministry. Today we start with the smaller churches and their need to develop new ministries and to grow into a theology of calling and purpose. Then, it will reach into our large churches as the church struggles with our calling to be reconciled in our faith to each other through Jesus Christ. We are not a group of God's people standing alone as a single congregation but we are the church meeting in groups of congregations to serve our God.

Until we find the importance of general reconciliation we will never be the church God has called us to be. We cannot go into all the world, into the four corners, to preach and baptize people when we cannot let Christ reconcile us into the faith which Christ Jesus has given us.

I believe cooperative parish ministries are the start of genuine church reconciliation. They are churches working together to be good stewards of God's callings and blessings, and people giving of their talents and gifts for the ministry of God and not just a single congregation.

CHAPTER THREE

STRATEGY FOR SMALL-MEMBERSHIP CHURCH RENEWAL PLANNING

My overall goal of the project is to create a new style of uniting the small-membership church into cooperative ministry. The most important component is the creation of hope in the churches within the cooperative ministry, to create an evaluation that churches can use to evaluate their ministry, and to create an opportunity for decision-making about their style and types of ministry, how it can affect the hope and spirit of the small-membership church that has been searching for a renewed spirit of purpose.

I believe this type of ministry will call the church back to the style of church ministry when the church was very connectional. As United Methodists we struggle to be a connectional church, yet we cannot deny the concept of being a single church appointment at the apex of our ministry goals.

My personal goal has been to strengthen the small-membership church. The connectional church can become one body through reconciliation ministry.

FOUR STEP PROCESS OF DESIGN

To accomplish the main goal, four steps must be taken. These steps give the churches involved an opportunity to see how they are serving God, the church universal, the local congregation and community.

The four steps are the creation of a vision, establishing a parish council, creating the work areas and their job descriptions, and an evaluation of the unity and vision created through this process.

IMPLEMENTATION

I used the model of the Yoked Cooperative Parish, where a group of small-membership churches would join in ministries within the churches and community. Once these churches were acknowledged and some common ministerial needs sighted they were to be placed by priority of needs for forming a Yoked Parish.

I started the project by contacting the District Superintendent, Rev. Jeannette' Cooper, about being able to implement the model of renewal (Appendix 1). Rev. Cooper assigned me to the strategy committee of the Newark District, West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. The strategy committee became an important group of people to work with as we began to develop the steps of the project into a set of usable ministry tools.

The strategy committee became my context associates as we began to develop cooperative parish ministries (Appendix 1). There were some important goals the strategy committee had to meet before we could begin to implement this model of cooperative parish ministries. These goals were self education, conference/district education, parish education and parish presentation.

Self education: The strategy committee began to learn the concept of the connectional church beyond the Conference and District connection. For self education we studied different types of cooperative parishes already being used as ministry tools. They included the N. O. W. parishes, which are small-membership churches that use the Administrative Council work areas of Nurture, Outreach and Witness ministries, and the different cooperative parishes in West Ohio Conference. When we felt prepared, the strategy committee was given a group of charges/churches to create a format to present a cooperative style of ministry (Appendix 1). Once we understood the concept of parish ministry and its usefulness the committee presented it to Rev. Cooper. She understood the concept of a cooperative parish ministry and asked me to prepare a presentation for the Conference and District Council on Ministries (Appendix 2).

Conference/District education: The proposal was completed on April 19, 1995. The District Superintendent presented the proposal to the District Council On Ministries and worked through the concept of the yoked cooperative parish. The D. C. O. A. (District Council On Administration) supported the proposal and proposed $12,000 in start up money for the remainder of 1995 and $20,000 for 1996.

The West Ohio Conference Cabinet looked longer at the proposal. They tabled the proposal and used the next month to work through it. The Conference would not appoint a minister to this type of setting without more information on how it would work. Knowing that most of this information can only be gathered during the implementation of the model, the Cabinet gave its approval to organize a yoked cooperative parish with the approval of the churches involved in the project.

This arrangement makes for a lot of work to find a group of congregations with a vision of this type and style of ministry; for the District Superintendent to get these congregations to come together in a yoked cooperative parish; for the appointment of an elder and other part-time or local pastors to the different congregations to make up the ministerial staff needed to make the yoked cooperative parish functional; and then to organize the yoked cooperative parish after everything is in place. I hope to present this type of ministry to the Cabinet again so they can have a better understanding of the necessity of appointing the type of ministers needed to make this a worthwhile project.

Parish education: This has become the most important part of the implementation of the project. The vision of the church moves slowly and at times seems not to move at all. The members of a congregation can have many different ideas about the ministry of their congregation. This ministry can be a singular ministry of each person coming to God or as wide spread as the world mission ministry to all peoples and nations.

Parish education is in the forefront of the model of yoked cooperative parish ministry. On April 30, 1995, under the direction of the Newark District Superintendent, five churches were presented the yoked cooperative parish ministry. The project was

presented in one meeting. They were given one week to think on its ministry for their congregation and community. The next week they were to fill out an evaluation and ministry preference rating.

The results showed that less than ten percent understood the concept of the yoked cooperative parish ministry. This brought the strategy committee, Rev. Cooper and myself to a conclusion that a vision of this type and style of ministry has to be nurtured and given time to develop.

During this time a special meeting of ministers appointed to parishes that could come under consideration for yoked cooperative parishes was set. The ministers were also under-educated about cooperative ministries, especially the yoked parish ministries. There were many misconceptions about this form of ministry. The level of understanding of a yoked cooperative parish ministry was a lot higher than before the meeting, but many of the ministers did not want an appointment into a cooperative parish of any type.

On June 6, 1995 I was given the approval to begin a series of training meetings to develop an understanding of yoked cooperative parish ministry within a group of four churches. I contacted all four Administrative Council chairpersons and set up our first meeting on June 27, 1995.

To accomplish the education needed to implement a yoked cooperative parish we set up a time schedule of twelve weeks (Appendix 3). There would be a meeting each week dealing with a specific part of the yoked cooperative parish. These meetings would be divided between informative meetings about yoked ministries, committee formation and job description, preaching and theological importance of cooperative ministries and evaluations.

The first two meetings were informative meetings. We discussed the many different ways that yoked cooperative parish ministries would help the smaller congregations and the communities where they serve out their ministry calling. We

discussed the structure of the official parish council and committees, the local Administrative Council and the increased laity involvement.

The next six meetings were used to develop parish committees and their job descriptions. The job descriptions were based on the Conference descriptions but adapted to a yoked cooperative parish (Appendix 4). This became a very helpful step in the development of understanding the yoked cooperative parish. Using nomination forms(Appendix 5), outlining these committees and the local congregations, made everything clearer.

I next used two Sundays to preach on the theology of cooperative ministry (Appendix 9). After preaching to the two churches on the charge I serve, I was able to exchange pulpits with the minister temporarily serving the other two churches. This was also a broadening of the number of people who had been involved in the development of the yoked cooperative parish ministry within the four churches.

The next two meetings were used to bring together loose ends and to deal with related questions and ideas concerning cooperative ministries. Along with completing the theology of the yoked cooperative ministry, I compared what we had accomplished with the concepts of the three other types of ministry that are now being used for the appointment of ministers and conference relationships.

We completed the phase of parish education on September 7, 1995. I felt the congregations had come a long way from the first meeting. They had made an important journey of faith and education.

Parish presentation: On September 14, 1995, the last meeting of the project for developing a yoked cooperative parish was called. During this meeting every step of the process was to be presented and discussed. With the use of overhead projector transparencies (Appendix 8), I presented the ministry styles of the four types of appointments now available to the congregations. Starting with the single church

appointment, moving through the charge appointment, then the cooperative parish, and ending with the yoked cooperative parish.

This meeting came to a conclusion with the completion of an evaluation (Appendix 6). The evaluation consisted of general information about the person involved in the development of the yoked cooperative parish ministry. It also asked about their involvement and understanding development through out this process.

The evaluation concluded with a rating of the styles of ministries. This was not a vote of acceptance or refusal of the yoked cooperative ministry, but was intended to gain an insight of the understanding of the different ministries and how they might be rated after most of the members of the congregations have had an opportunity to study its value to the smaller congregations. The results of the evaluation were recorded and summarized (Appendix 7).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE YOKED PARISH

In presenting the Yoked Parish Model of cooperative parish ministries, we need to start with the understanding of how ministers are appointed to the local church. This will lead us into the basic parts of the model, The Formation; Organizing; Informational Meetings; Committee Meetings; The Parish Council; Congregation Administrative Councils; Parish Meetings with the District Superintendent; and the Evaluations.

THE MODEL

The pattern of appointment to a small-membership church has been to place a part time pastor or a retiring minister into their pastorate. In this type of appointment many churches feel the Conference and District do not care if they grow or die as long as they have someone in their pulpit. Until we begin to deal with the needs within our smaller congregations our denomination will have a hard time growing.

John Wesley used the class meetings to check on the fever of the children of God. Today we can use the small-membership church in much the same way. Through the cooperative parish the local congregations are much like the class meetings, while the parish is the larger church structure.

The Formation: The strength of the church comes from its ability to be in ministry to the community in which it is established. The first consideration for a yoked cooperative parish is the local congregation's culture. The culture of the community must support the common good of its people. If each community supports the other communities and congregations there will be a strong culture to build upon.

The second consideration for a parish setting is the geographical locations of the churches. Noting main roads, connecting each congregation to the others, and natural land contours will be important aspects of choosing the congregations. School districts and

county boundaries can greatly change the dynamics of a yoked cooperative parish by competitive rivalries.

With all of these aspects in mind the last part of the formation of the yoked cooperative parish comes with the ability to put together a financial package that will support the ministry needed for these congregations. Once a number of congregations, whether it is two or ten, has been selected as the main group to form this parish the next process is ready to begin.

Organizing: Once a group of congregations have been considered for a yoked cooperative parish ministry an informational meeting must be set. This might be the first time a congregation has heard about a yoked cooperative parish. Once the congregations' Administrative Councils have met and have been given the basic theology of the yoked cooperative parish ministry a series of meetings need to be scheduled.

Informational meetings: The first four meetings will deal with a deeper explanation of the yoked cooperative parish. The Administrative Councils will have a series of informative meetings, with most of the time being given to visioning, which will include the needs of the congregations and community. Special efforts are to be given to the benefits and difficulties of a yoked cooperative parish consisting of their individual congregations. A vision of these areas of ministry and concerns will be created for the committees to use as they form parish committees and their job descriptions.

Committee meetings: The next six meetings will deal with the creation of parish committees and their ministry to the parish, congregations and community. The Conference description of the committees will be used as a point of reference to build the new committees. Once they have created their job description and parish visioning they forward a copy to the newly forming parish council.

The Parish Council: The parish council will be made up of the congregations Administrative Council chairs, the committee chairs, and a representative from the congregations' trustees. There will also be a parish treasurer, a Conference representative,

and a parish lay leader. Their first official meeting will be scheduled after the committees have completed their job descriptions and visioning statement for the parish. They will schedule two meetings to fill vacant council seats and to create a joint visioning statement, from the visioning that started in the first four meetings for the yoked cooperative parish. Once this is completed the visioning statement will be forwarded to the congregations Administrative Councils.

Congregation Administrative Councils: Each Council will schedule a reorganization meeting. The number of meetings will be directly influenced by the number of congregations involved in this particular yoked cooperative parish. The purpose of these meetings will be to coordinate the Council seats with the representatives from each committee, a representative of the congregation trustees, a congregational treasurer, and a nomination chair.

Parish meeting with District Superintendent: With the yoked cooperative parish now in an operational form of ministry, the District Superintendent needs to discuss the appointment process with the parish council. The first appointment must be an elder who has cooperative parish experience or an elder who has studied cooperative parish ministry. The next appointment should be a student minister interested in experiencing a yoked cooperative parish setting. These students will become the experienced elders for future yoked cooperative ministries.

The ministerial staff will be set according to the ministry needs of the congregations, the number of congregations and the financial strength of the parish. The financial situation must be considered last so it will not influence the visioning of the parish ministries.

Evaluation: The conclusion of the process of becoming a yoked cooperative parish comes with an evaluation. The evaluation will help to see if need areas were dealt with, concerns for ministerial needs were addressed and ministry growth happened during the intense sessions. An evaluation of the process will help the parish council to begin its

ministry to the congregations and community by the input of the people who were involved in the beginning of a new ministry, not the completion of an old ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEARNINGS FROM THE YOKED MODEL

LEARNINGS

What I Set Out To Learn

The objective of my studies was to learn how cooperative ministries can renew the small-membership church, especially as we enter the twenty-first century. We can learn how to help small-membership churches form a relationship that will form cooperative ministries by focusing on two main points.

The first point comes from studying the location of the churches and developing a plan of cooperative ministries. Learning about different ways to study a church and the community would be very beneficial.

The second point of learning was the design of the parish's connection through committees, ministries, and communities. I had to learn of ways to take many variables and bring them into a design of cooperation that would be used in forming a yoked cooperative parish ministry.

What I Learned

I learned that United Methodists are not as connectional as our Discipline and faith calls us to be. Many of the congregations feel they are to be a single church, surviving on their own even if it means they will have to close the doors of their church building later. I also learned that ministers are not much different in their thinking.

I believe the small-membership church has a special ministry in our denomination. But, the small-membership church will not understand its ministry as long as the denomination and the ordained clergy keep teaching that a truly ministering church must be growing faster than its community is shrinking. The small-membership church is usually

located where a boom town had once stood. Now there are only a few houses left, no high schools, few "mom-and-pop" stores and the church.

As for the clergy, we need to change the teaching we receive in seminary about the importance of moving up the ladder of success by forcing growth or by our desire to minister in the larger churches. It is as much of God's calling to serve a small-membership church as to have a church so large that we do not know the members of the congregation.

There has to be a way to change this mind set in our churches. How do we stop comparing our churches with each other? Are we called to be in competition with one another or in service with one another? I have discovered that we must do something now or there will not be enough clergy prepared and trained to be in small-membership church ministries.

Whet Happened To Me During The Process

I have discovered that I had also bought into the thinking that bigger is better. I started out with four small country churches and was soon filled with the dream of a single church appointment. I kept striving towards my concept of making it as a minister until I received an appointment to a single station church.

It was at this time that I discovered that I was doing a lot more ministry in the small-membership church than I could with my appointment to a single station church. I *moved up* from a three-church parish with 250 members to a single church with 200 members. I received more pay, but I served fewer people. Was the denomination and my concept wrong about true ministry?

I no longer accept the thinking that bigger is better. God does not call us to build every church into a mega-church. God calls us to serve the church or churches which we are called or appointed to. There is a place for the five thousand membership church, as

well as a place for the ten membership church. I needed to get pride out of my calling into ministry and this process helped me to get centered in my faith.

What Were My Most Significant Learnings

Context: The church is a slow-moving force. It does not accept new ideas quickly and when it does accept new ideas it moves with great caution. Before any change can occur, a vision has to be accepted and ready to be put into place.

I discovered that it takes a longer time to prepare a group of churches to vision about their churches in the next century. Through the different presentations that I have made to the church, I have discovered that a single presentation is almost an impossible task. I had to create multiple presentations upon which to build a vision. In my context, I used twelve weeks, or three months to create a vision of cooperative ministry. I would suggest at least six months for the process of developing a cooperative parish. In the Kansas Conference, they will take up to a year to develop each parish.

Theology: I learned that theology is an outpouring of faith, traditions and reasoning. One does not have to prove their theology by making it fit or appear like another theology. One of the best learning experiences I had during this process was to believe in my own concepts of theology as they grew out of my faith in Jesus Christ.

As we form new parishes and churches, we do so out of the needs of our communities to find a way to serve God within their lives. We cannot control today's ministries with yesterday's theological answers. We need to search for today's answers from within God's Holy Word, then let the needs of the people of today bring forth those theological answers they seek.

A new pattern of connectional church ministries rises out of the old. We read where Paul sent a letter to the seven churches in Asia. In ministry we read where Jesus

sent the disciples out by two. This pattern is recreated for the churches of today. A pattern of connectional church ministry that will strengthen their calling of ministry.

Working with others in ministry: As I began to share the concept of a yoked cooperative parish with people who live and serve in a small- membership church a sense of renewal is shared. When people who live their ministry in the small-membership church catch the vision of a yoked cooperative parish I see new hope in their thinking. I believe this is where the yoked cooperative ministries will have to begin.

One of the stronger points of a yoked cooperative parish is the need to be in ministry with others. No single person, or congregation, can make this process work. It takes many faithful Christians to make this ministry work and work at its best.

It is a new-found freedom for the small-membership church to be in a ministry that it could not accomplish on its own. The spirit of a congregation is renewed when it finds the resources of both time and money. There isn't a much greater joy than to hear and see a congregation perform a ministry that it couldn't before. It is at that moment renewal is born. For these churches God is doing a new thing!

EVALUATION OF YOKED PARISH MINISTRY

From this process I have learned that all churches have the same foundation. But the denominations have not built upon that foundation for the ministry within the small-membership church. Many people want their church to become a larger church by having a numerical growth in attendance and membership.

One of the first, and one of the most important, aspects of yoked parish ministries comes when people are ready to serve God and Jesus Christ as the church universal. That we are congregations of the larger church, which is the body of Jesus Christ. Once a set of churches come to this realization they are ready to begin a cooperative ministry.

The United Methodist Church, or any other denomination, cannot make churches and congregations into yoked parishes without the local congregations seeing a vision of ministry within the cooperative parish. Once the vision of cooperative ministries have become the vision of a group of churches, that have the ability to become a yoked parish, a new parish will be born.

CHAPTER SIX

BEYOND THE PROJECT

CONCLUSION

When we recognize the value of the small-membership church and their vision of being in ministry, and not just surviving, we can turn our attention to the future church. We need to teach cooperative ministries in our seminaries, in special conference events and seminars, and in district training events. Without cooperative ministries in our small-membership churches I see many ministry settings closing their doors to the people who need them the most, the poor.

As we head into the twenty-first century we need to dream about the church and its ability to regain the influence and power of local ministry. We cannot influence the small towns, villages and country folk in a large mega-church. The people have grown up knowing every neighbor in their community. They also like to worship with those who they know from their community.

As a yoked parish, the small-membership church will be connected with other small-membership churches in ministry to their community and in their own special way, the world. But this dream starts with a single vision. The church in a cooperative setting can do more for the people of the church and their community than the church can by itself. When this dream is made into reality the church of tomorrow will not be kept within the walls of a building. It will spread over the land and find its way into homes and businesses. The church will be set free to grow.

GLOSSARY

APPALACHIAN: A group of people that was first noted because of their geographical differences. Then the classification became sociological and ecological. This group can also be classified theologically. Even with this classification, many of the things that make Appalachia unique, many other groups share common geographical, socioeconomic, and theological definitions.

CHARGE PARISH: Two or three churches share the same minister. Each church continues to work independently in all other parts of ministry. Can also be called a **Circuit**.

COMMUNITY: Often there are many types of communities of which we are a part of. To many Appalachian and country folks community is anywhere you are with others you share a part of your life with. To be in a community one might share the same church, store, doctor, school, and/or geographical area.

COOPERATIVE PARISH: A pattern of organization that may include several local churches, pastoral charges, and/or other related church agencies.

PARISH: One or more local churches located in the same geographical area which coordinate programs through intentional cooperative organizations/churches.

PARISH STAFF-TYPE MINISTRY: Two or more United Methodist churches who share a staff of pastors, coordinators, and/or professional leaders.

RECONCILIATION: The ministry of becoming one in God and church. As a person becomes a part of the body of Christ, the local congregation becomes a part of the whole church. As we learn ways of reconciliation and unity the church will one day be united by the local congregations/churches. We need to be in a type of reconciliation ministry that brings the body of Christ's church together and not separated by our human differences as we have in the past.

YOKED PARISH: a parish of two or more churches connected by their sharing of ministry beyond the minister and/or staff. A full parish council ministry.

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APPENDIX 1

JOURNAL OF COOPERATIVE PARISH MEETINGS

Journal of Cooperative Parish Meetings

Doctor of Ministry Program, Randy Hardman

In January 1995 I was appointed to the Parish & Community Development Committee(P. & C. D.). This appointment meant I would also serve on the strategy committee on the Newark District.

In February I met with both committees and began working with multiple parish needs. The most important one of these committees is the strategy committee, where we work with the church and parish needs within our district.

On March 30, the committee began earnest work on developing parish ministries. We were given the task of working with a group of churches in a community that were in need of appointments. Jeanette' Cooper, Newark District Superintendent, asked the committee to envision a new ministry that could cause church renewal in these smaller churches.

I shared my concept of multiple-church parishes and the use of a multiple-staff appointment to supply the churches with the needed ministerial staff. With this concept every parish could have an experienced ordained elder, with associate ministers fulfilling their needs.

Jeanette' liked the concept and appointed me as a consultant on multiple-church parishes. We called this style of cooperative ministry "Multiple-Staff Cooperative Parish." With this vision I was to write up a paper to present to the Cabinet of the West Ohio Conference and Newark District D. C. O. M. (proposal #1).

I used the information on five churches, which made up four appointments, which included one elder, a full time local pastor, a part time local pastor and a retired pastor.

I had the presentation ready in five days for the Cabinet. On April 5, the Cabinet received the proposal for this parish. They liked the concept but wanted a realistic concept with amounts of ministry-staff and cost comparison.

On April 19, I had completed a proposal (proposal#2) which included the part time pastors that were appointed there, or someone similar to that level of ministry. I also included an experienced ordained elder. Along with this I submitted a "vision" of what I would like to see as a parish.

My vision included a student pastor. I believe that we need to include a learning environment for this renewal ministry. This parish will be a source of learning for future ministers who would be appointed to a multiple-staff cooperative parish.

The D. C. O. M. has support this ministry with $12,000 start-up money for the last half of 1995 and $20,000 for 1996. They will also support two more parishes with $20,000 each starting in 1996.

The District Superintendent presented this proposal to the five churches on April 22. They are to have a church meeting on April 23, after worship to present this proposal to all church members. On April 30, the churches are to met in another church meeting and vote on the proposal before them.

This is the completion of the first phase of my project.

On April 25, the strategy committee met to receive updated information on the process of the Multi-Staff Cooperative Parish. Everyone is very excited about this project. The Strategy Committee is beginning to consider other churches to be included in future yoked parishes.

On April 30, 1995 the five churches met to take a vote on the Multi-Staff Co-operative Parish. The largest two churches voted not to form a new parish. They had enough representation (from a formula to consider representation percentages of the parish) to stop its formation.

At this time the Strategy Committee moved on to look at two other charges to be formed into a Multi-Staff Cooperative Parish. The ministers of these charges came together at an informative meeting about the Multi-Staff Cooperative Parish. There was a lot of misconception about this form of cooperative parishes. Once this meeting was completed some of the ministers had a better understanding of parish ministry.

On June 6, 1995 the Strategy Committee gave the go-ahead to begin work on the new alignment of churches for a cooperative parish. This parish would include the two churches of the Pleasant United Methodist Charge and the Thurston-New Salem Charge, with two churches, north of my parish. There were to begin dialogue urging them to be incorporated into a Multi-Staff Cooperative Parish. The Strategy Committee and District Superintendent felt a need to incorporate the churches into this parish by acceptance of a vision.

The District Superintendent was to make an appointment of a minister into the charge setting. Her placement was made with the understanding that this would become a parish. She placed a student pastor on the parish. The student pastor will not start her ministry

there until September 1995. This gives time for the parish to form properly before she becomes a member of the staff.

The time after conference was used to work on the job descriptions of committees and work areas for the parish ministry. There was a fine line that had to be kept in rewording the job description and how the membership of the churches would be represented on the committees. The new job descriptions were to be completed by September 1, 1995.

A meeting of the Administrative councils of the churches was arranged. On June 27, 1995 the four administrative councils met to receive information on parish ministries. It was at this time that the churches were to begin influencing the process of organizing a parish. We discussed the committees that would be on the parish level as well as the responsibility of the local administrative council.

The month of July was spent working on job descriptions of the work areas. The first committee to be worked on was the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. It was felt the P. P. R. C. was the best place to start. This was also the longest committee meeting of all the work areas. We have also completed the work areas of Worship, Education and Outreach. Each one becoming easier to see the ministry assignments they are to be responsible for.

During the summer I preached a series of sermons on cooperative ministries. They touched on the subjects that cooperative ministries use as their theological foundations.

On August 10, 1995 the four Administrative Councils of the Pleasant and the Thurston-New Salem Charges met again. The Parish Council was discussed. Setting the boundaries of responsibility and ministries has proven to be a great task. People do not want the

Parish Council to become too powerful for the congregations and parish. Dealing with this council has become very tedious.

The month of August was used to finalize the job descriptions and to send these descriptions to every administrative council. Once this was accomplished and every council had time to look over the committees work a joint meeting of the four local councils was called.

On September 14, 1995, we met to develop the yoked cooperative parish. Every part of the process was discussed. At the end of the discussion an evaluation was taken. With this evaluation the strategy committee could better understand the acceptance, or refusal, of the yoked cooperative parish.

The stategy committee will be meeting in October to discuss the evaluations and to make suggestions to the District Superintendent for alignment of parish and appointments.

APPENDIX 2

MULTIPLE-STAFF YOKED PARISH

MULTIPLE-STAFF YOKED PARISH

This style of ministry setting will be a combination of two basic types of ministerial setting already being used. The first comes from the need of the small-membership church and cooperative parish ministry. The second comes from the strength of multiple staff ministerial setting.

This type of small-membership church renewal would help the small-membership church regain its identity as a church in ministry and not just a church surviving. The small church has been seen as a congregation that could only be served by someone just starting or ending their ministry. Too often, when a church needs strength to be in ministry, it is given an appointment with little experience or an appointment with a lot of experience but reduced work ability as they move into retirement.

If the conference nor district will tell the small-membership church that their ministry is important, how long do we think they can continue in ministry? Wesley used the small class meetings to check the fever of the children of God. If we check the small-membership church to see the fever of the United Methodist denomination we might begin to understand why the denomination is losing its members. Turn up the fever in the small church by showing the church we believe in the ministry of when "two or three are gathered." By changing the spirit of the small-membership church we can change the spirit of the ministry within it. The appointment to a Yoked Parish is not a punishment but a new ministry of renewal.

The Yoked Setting

The parish will be formed with the help of a survey of ministry. The survey will get to the heart of the vision of the church in a yoked setting. The survey will help us to understand the theology of the church. It is not necessary for each church in a yoked parish to have the same theology but it helps to understand where reconciliation ministry will be needed.

Formation of the parish will consider geographical locations of each church. Main roads connecting the church to the parish, and natural land contours will be important aspects to be considered. If there is a major difference in geographic locations there might be a hidden barrier to a cooperative parish. An on-site knowledge of the parish is needed to give the best assessment.

Community needs and availability to main urban areas will also be important to the yoked parish. If a church uses a different community than the rest of the parish, it could make cooperation more difficult. It would not keep a church from becoming a part of a parish. It would add new dynamics to the yoked ministries of the parish that would have to be considered.

Another aspect of community would be local school district boundaries. If there is tension within the school districts it could change the dynamics of the parish. Such things as sport-rival schools, or county competitive schools could become a major barrier to deal with. The best setting for a parish would be to have each church within the same school district. The next best setting would have the parish within two completely separate types of school districts.

With all these considerations in mind the final influence upon the parish will be the financial package for the ministerial appointment. Cost of ministry and availability of support will help determine the total number of churches assigned to a parish. This will not

outweigh the above mentioned needs and considerations but will always be an important consideration.

Multiple-Staff Ministry

The ministerial appointments will be made to the parish. The conference and districts need to view the parish as a single appointment with multiple congregations. They will work as a staff ministry to each church and not to a specific church/es. There will be a senior pastor and a predetermined number of associate pastor/s for each parish. The ministerial work load will be assigned by the gifts of the ministers appointed to the parish.

The senior pastor will be the administrator and the supervisor/mentor of the associate pastor/s of the parish. This pastor will be responsible for preaching, parish and church council meetings, the committees of the trustees, P.P.R.C., parish ministry work areas and parish coordination. As supervisor/mentor to the associate pastor/s there would be regular staff meetings to keep coordination among the pastors and any laity staff of the parish. The senior pastor would also be responsible to mentor the associate pastor/s and to help guide and nurture the gifts and talents of the pastors of the parish.

The associate pastor/s appointment will be to the parish. The need of the parish will determine the ministerial work areas assigned to each pastor. Such areas of ministry could include youth ministry, visitation ministry, preaching and parish coordination ministry.

Parish Settings

Each parish would have its own design of cooperation among the churches assigned to the parish. The number of churches in a parish will be determined by the aspects listed in the first section. There could be as few as two and upwards of ten churches appointed to a yoked parish. Once the number of churches have been determined, the staff is then set. The parish setting will be the final influence determining the size of the staff.

The appointment of the experienced elder is the first step in establishing the ministerial staff. The level of ministry needed to minister to the churches of the parish will determine the qualifications of the associate ministers. My vision is to have at least one student minister on the parish. This will help to build our pool of experienced elders for future appointments to the multi-staff yoked parishes.

I believe that churches and ministers alike will look upon the yoked parish ministry in a new way. It will not be a punishment nor a sign of survival when you are a part of the multi-staff yoked parish. You will find yourself in the midst of a revival; the renewal of the small church.

Vision Statement

I vision the parish as a place for training new ministers for multi-staff parish appointments. If the associate ministers are local pastors or lay pastors then we will not be equipping the church for the future. There will also be the added cost of housing and

hospitalization to be worked out with a student appointment. This added cost would be given back in the valuable training received by a student minister.

This experience could not be given in a seminary setting. If we are to begin renewal within the smaller churches, of our denomination, we need to start teaching our new ministers the importance of cooperative ministry as a whole ministry.

In this vision I see the beginning of renewal and the preparation for future growth. It will take a lot of courage, hope and faith. Together, with this vision, we are standing at the beginning of the church in a new ministry.

APPENDIX 3

TWELVE WEEK TIME SCHEDULE

TWELVE WEEK TIME SCHEDULE

JUNE:

27; Meeting with all 4 Churches

JULY:

6; Meeting with all 4 Churches

13; Pastor Parish Committee Meeting

20; Worship Committee Meeting

27; Education Committee Meeting

AUGUST:

3; Outreach Committee Meeting

10; Evangilism Committee Meeting

13; Preached on Cooperative Ministry

20; Preached on Cooperative Ministry

24; Membership Committee Meeting

29; Parish Council Formation Meeting

SEPTEMBER:

7; Local Councils receive Job Descriptions

14; Overview of Parish Ministries and Evaluations

APPENDIX 4

YOKED PARISH MODEL

YOKED MODEL OF COOPERATIVE PARISH MINISTRY

CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
CHURCH BOARD of the TRUSTEES

PARISH COUNCIL

PASTOR-PARISH COMMITTEE

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Each church will have an Administrative Council and a Board of Trustees. The Administrative Council will be made up of representatives from the Parish Council and the Work Area Committees. The representation on the committees will be adjusted by the percentage of church memberships as compared to the total parish membership, or by agreement of the Parish Council if the parish includes a large-membership church. As an example, if all churches are about the same size then there will be equal involvement in the cooperative parish ministry. While having a large-membership church could cause the parish to be controlled by the larger church an agreement could keep the representation equal on the parish council.

The budget of the cooperative ministries will be set by the Parish Council and be requested by the set percentage of involvement by each church. Apportionments will continue to be a part of the Administrative Council responsibility.

Following will be the work description of each council and committee. In the description of work responsibilities there will be very little cross-over ministries.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Primary Task:

To lead your congregation in long-range planning and in carrying out its programs. To receive persons into its fellowship, encourage and strengthen their relationship with God and to support them as they develop as Christian Disciples.

Responsibilities:

1. To serve as the local church body of the Charge Conference, overseeing the administration and programs of the congregation.

2. To study the hopes, concerns and needs of your community. To make recommendations as to how the church and parish might serve the community better.

3. To provide effective lay leadership for the ministry of the congregation.

4. To recommend to the Parish Council the budget needs of ministry and pastoral benefit on behave of your congregation.

5. To fill vacancies, on recommendation of the Administrative Council, for the position that are a part of its council, trustees, and committees.

6. To appoint representatives to the Parish Council and Work Areas.

7. To be accountable to the Charge Conference.

8. To support the Parish Council.

CHURCH BOARD of the TRUSTEES

Primary Task:

To supervise and maintain all property belonging to your congregation so that the ministries of the congregation can be effective.

Responsibilities:

1. To oversee, care for, maintain and supervise all local church property, reporting annually to the charge conference.

2. To receive and administer all gifts that are made to the congregation.

3. To make certain that all trust funds of the congregation are invested properly.

4. To insure that the Articles of Incorporation of the congregation are up-to-date.

5. To be responsible, in consultation with the pastor, for all use of the church building and grounds.

6. To be responsible for adequate insurance coverage on all church property.

7. To submit annual budget request to the Church Administrative Council under the chair of finance for property maintenance and improvement, as well as new property purchases.

8. To be accountable to the Charge Conference.

9. To be supportive of the Administrative and Parish Councils.

PARISH COUNCIL

Primary Task:

To lead in developing goals and programs to fulfill the ministry of the parish. To support the local congregations in their discipleship, through church programs and projects, in partnership with other organizations, and with the connectional church.

Responsibilities:

1. To study the hopes and concerns of the congregations and community and determine how the parish might serve them and each other.

2. To propose plans for the parish ministries. To support the various work areas and committees as they carry out these plans.

3. To use the resources for ministry provided by the district, Annual Conference, jurisdiction, and General Council on Ministries, and the general boards and agencies.

4. To ensure that work area and committee tasks are carried out.

5. To make recommendations to the Pastor-Parish-Relations Committee (in consultation with the pastor), regarding professional and other staff positions needed to carry out programs and ministries.

6. To request from the Church Administrative Councils the funds needed to carry out programs and ministries.

7. To be accountable to the Charge Conference.

8. To be supportive of the Administrative Councils.

PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Primary Task:

To support your pastor(s) and other staff so that these persons can work effectively in managing the ministry of your congregation for witness and service.

Responsibilities:

1. To work with the district superintendent and/or the bishop in an advisory capacity in maters pertaining to clergy leadership.

2. To discuss regularly with the pastor(s) and staff the personnel conditions that affect the congregation's total ministry.

3. To counsel with the pastor(s) and staff about job descriptions, priorities, and expectations.

4. To communicate openly with the pastor/s, staff, and congregation.

5. To evaluate annually the effectiveness of the pastor/s and staff.

6. To make recommendations of salary, travel, housing, and other financial matters to the Parish Council and the Church Administrative Councils.

7. To inspect the parsonage with the pastor and trustees annually to insure proper maintenance.

8. To seek, interview, and recommend to the Charge Conference qualified candidates for ordained and diaconal ministries.

9. To support and encourage continuing education for the pastor/s.

10. To seek to understand feelings and desires within the congregation about the pastor's leadership and appointment.

11. To be accountable to the Charge Conference Admin. and Parish Councils.

WORK AREA ON WORSHIP

Primary Task:

To work with your pastor to ensure that your congregation and parish provides opportunities for worship that will help persons develop and strengthen their relationship with God, so that they may live more faithfully as Christian disciples.

Responsibilities:

1. To learn about the people in your congregation, parish and communities so that you can plan appropriately for worship experiences.

2. To cooperate with the pastor in planning worship.

3. To help the congregations to become aware of the meaning, purpose and practice of worship.

4. To promote musical leadership in the churches.

5. To cooperate in other educational experiences for the congregations so that persons of all ages better understand the meaning, purpose and practice of worship.

6. To encourage wider use and understanding of architecture and arts as expressions of faith and as a means of proclaiming the gospel.

7. To be accountable to the Parish and Administrative Councils.

WORK AREA ON EDUCATION

Primary Task:

To provide learning experiences for persons of all ages so that they may grow in understanding the gospel and becoming better equipped for daily living as Christian disciples.

Responsibilities:

1. To coordinate the planning and implementation of a comprehensive Christian education ministry for your congregation, parish and community.

2. To nominate persons to the parish council for election as superintendents, teachers, counselors, and officers of the church schools.

3. To be familiar with the overall goals of the congregation and parish, how these goals influence the educational programs and how they can be extended.

4. To facilitate the use of United Methodist curriculum resources based on plans that have been approved by the General Board of Discipleship.

5. To learn about educational opportunities useful to persons of all ages, both in your congregation, parish and in the neighboring communities.

6. To link with organizations, persons, and resources in and beyond the congregation and parish that are concerned for Christian education.

7. To be accountable to the Parish and Administrative Councils.

WORK AREA ON OUTREACH

Primary Task:

To address the concerns and conditions of persons in your congregations, communities and across the world, so that the quality of life may be improved for all.

Responsibilities:

1. To coordinate, plan, carry out, and evaluate the parish's ministry in the areas of Christian unity, church and society, missions, religion and race, health and welfare ministries, status and role of women, and outreach to potential members.

2. To learn about the hopes and concerns of persons in the churches and communities.

3. To be familiar with the overall goals the parish has set for itself, how these goals relate to outreach and how this work area might extend those goals through the congregations.

4. To cooperate in ministries and programs within the parish, other United Methodist congregations and other denominational congregations.

5. To link with organizations, persons, and resources of the congregations, parish and communities that share hopes and concerns related to outreach.

6. To be accountable to the Parish and Administrative councils.

WORK AREA ON EVANGELISM

Primary Task:

To ensure that your congregations reach out to people with the Good News of Jesus Christ and receive them into their care, so that these persons may develop a relationship with God and live as Christian disciples.

Responsibilities:

1. To work with the minister, Administrative Council and the Parish Council to make evangelism a vital part of each congregation's ministry.

2. To care for all members of the congregation and parish (both active and inactive), as well as persons who are not members of any congregation. To help all know and respond to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

3. To work with all groups of persons, committees, councils of the congregation and parish to keep an updated prospect file and to provide for visitation programs.

4. To be familiar with the goals of the congregations and parish. To determine how evangelism relates to each goal.

5. To set goals for congregational and parish growth.

6. To plan specific evangelism events and ministries.

7. To develop and distribute devotional material and resources.

8. To recommend programs to help develop ministries of evangelism.

9. To be accountable to the Parish and Administrative Councils.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Primary Task:

To address the concerns and conditions of persons in your congregations, parish and community. To help enhance their spiritual life and equip them for a life of Christian discipleship.

Responsibilities:

1. To coordinate, plan and carry out the congregation and parish's ministries of membership care, stewardship, visitation, recreation and fellowship activities.

2. To learn about the hopes and concerns of persons in the congregations and community.

3. To be familiar with the overall goals of the congregations and the parish, to see how these goals relate to membership care, and how this work area may extend the goals of the congregations and parish.

4. To link with organizations, persons and resources of the congregation and parish that are related to membership care.

5. To be accountable to the Parish and Administrative Councils.

APPENDIX 5

PARISH COUNCIL NOMINATION FORMS

CHARGE CONFERENCE FORM
PARISH COUNCIL NOMINATION FORM

PARISH_____

DISTRICT_____

COUNTY_____DATE_____

PASTOR_____

ASSOC. PASTOR_____

PARISH COUNCIL

Lay Leader_____Lay Member_____

Council Chair_____Prh. Treasurer_____

P.P.R.C. Chr._____Worship Chr._____

Education Chr._____Outreach Chr._____

Evangelism Chr._____Membership Chr._____

Chg. Conf. Sec._____Parish Finance_____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

Admin. Council Chr._____Bd. Trustees Rep._____

PARISH COMMITTEES

Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (members appointed by % agreement)

Chr._____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Worship Committee (members appointed by % agreement)

Chr. _____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Education Committee (members appointed by % agreement)

Chr._____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

PARISH COMMITTEES

(continued)

Outreach Committee (members appointed by % agreement)

Chr._____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Evangelism Committee (members appointed by % agreement)

Chr._____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Membership Committee (members appointed by % agreement)

Chr._____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCILS

Congregation_____ Date_____

Pastor_____ Assoc. Pastor_____

Parish Lay Leader_____ Parish Lay Member_____

Adm. Council Chr._____ Trustee Rep._____

P.P.R.C. Rep._____ Worship Rep._____

Education Rep._____ Outreach Rep._____

Evangelism Rep._____ Membership Rep._____

Treasurer_____ Finance Sec._____

Members-at-large (members appointed by % agreement)

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

****

Board of Trustees; minimum of six(6) maximum of nine(9).

Rep._____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____

APPENDIX 6

EVALUATION OF MINISTRIES

PARISH MINISTRIES EVALUATION

Name _____

Charge/Parish _____

Date of Evaluation Period _____

General Information

What level of education have you completed? (circle highest)

High School	College/Special Training	Grad. School
1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 +

Age Range?

____ 20 - 35
____ 36 - 50
____ 51 - 65
____ 66 - 80
____ over 80

Occupation? _____

_____

Family Status?

____ Married
____ Divorced / widowed
____ Single
____ Children (if so how many) _____

Church Information?

You are a member of which congregation? _____

Are you in a leadership position? (if yes, what) _____

What leadership roles have you had in past? _____

_____

What Groups have you been involved in? (UMW, UMM, UMYF, etc.)

_____

Have you ever held a district or conference leadership position? _____

_____

Parish Ministry Information?

Have you participated in a multi-church charge before? Y / N

Have you participated in a cooperative parish before? Y / N

If yes, how? _____

Have you heard about yoked cooperative ministries before? Y / N

How many meetings did you attend on parish ministries?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On a scale of one to ten, how informative were these meetings?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (1=little, 10=a lot)

Has your understanding of cooperative parish ministries grown in

any way? _____

How could these meetings affect your congregation? _____

_____

Visioning Information?

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the

Multi-Church Charge?

Cooperative Parish?

Yoked Parish?

How might these ministries help your congregation?

Multi-Church Charge?

Cooperative Parish?

Yoked Parish?

How might these ministries hurt your congregation?

Multi-Church Charge?

Cooperative Parish?

Yoked Parish?

Do you feel the process of ***comparing parish ministries*** has given you a better understanding of the different types of parish ministries and has made a clearer understanding of how these styles of ministry would benefit your congregation?

Please rate the following items according to scale: 1=not true 10=true

Overall, this process was relevant to our congregation.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I can see this process having a positive impact on our congregation.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I believe other congregations could be helped by this process.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Participation in this process has strengthened my commitment.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate styles of ministry as you believe would be best suited for your congregation (keep in mind membership, attendance and budget). 1 is first choice, 2 is second choice, 3 is third choice, and 4 is forth choice.

____ Single Church Appointment(even with part time minister)

____ Charge Appointment (churches sharing ministerial needs only)

____ Cooperative Parish, (share in office & related ministries)

____ Yoked Cooperative Parish (yoked by ministerial staff & work areas)

APPENDIX 7

RESULTS OF EVALUATION

PARISH MINISTRIES EVALUATION

Name PLEASANT CHARGE

Charge/Parish _____

Date of Evaluation Period _____

General Information

What level of education have you completed? (circle highest)

High School	College/Special Training	Grad. School
1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 +
1 10	*1 1*	

Age Range?

0	20 - 35
2	36 - 50
5	51 - 65
6	66 - 80
0	over 80

Occupation? *9-Retired; 3-Self-employed; 1-Service Employed*

Family Status?

13	Married
0	Divorced / widowed
0	Single
4	Children (if so how many) *4 at home*

Church Information?

You are a member of which congregation? *5-P-Hill;3-P-Ville;3-T/NS*

Are you in a leadership position? (if yes, what) *13, serving every comm.*

What leadership roles have you had in past? *every area of ministry*

What Groups have you been involved in? (UMW, UMM, UMYF, etc.)

7-U.M.W. 4-U.M.M. 10-U.M.Y.F.

Have you ever held a district or conference leadership position? *none*

Parish Ministry Information?

Have you participated in a multi-church charge before? Y / N *N*

Have you participated in a cooperative parish before? Y / N *N*

If yes, how? _____

Have you heard about yoked cooperative ministries before? Y / N *N*

How many meetings did you attend on parish ministries?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
			2	*1*	*2*		*3*	*2*	*3*

On a scale of one to ten, how informative were these meetings?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
			1			*4*	*3*	*3*	*2*

(1=little, 10=a lot)

Has your understanding of cooperative parish ministries grown in any way? *10-YES; 3-LEFT BLANK*

How could these meetings affect your congregation? _____

_____ ***Many felt this is a good ministry*** _____

Visioning Information?

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the

Multi-Church Charge?

Churches remain independent, can desolve when needed

Cooperative Parish?

Vision of need for cooperative ministry in community;
Need more understanding of how this works

Yoked Parish?

Share more of the expense; must admit congregation is small-membership church

How might these ministries help your congregation?

Multi-Church Charge?

Share ministry expense for pastoral appointent

Cooperative Parish?

Open new forms of ministry in community

Yoked Parish?

Have more members to be in ministry together

How might these ministries hurt your congregation?

Multi-Church Charge?

Have to share ministers time with other congregations

Cooperative Parish?

Ministers and members involved in community ministries more than in ministries to the church

Yoked Parish?

Minister would become more involved in ministry task

Do you feel the process of ***comparing parish ministries*** has given you a better understanding of the different types of parish ministries and has made a clearer understanding of how these styles of ministry would benefit your congregation?

Most saw their role in ministry of congregation as a self-ministry with limited outreach as a style of ministry/mission

Please rate the following items according to scale: 1=not true 10=true

Overall, this process was relevant to our congregation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	*1*			*3*	*3*		*3*	*2*	

I can see this process having a positive impact on our congregation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	*1*	*2*	*4*	*3*		*2*			

I believe other congregations could be helped by this process.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	1		*1*	*2*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*2*	*2*

Participation in this process has strengthened my commitment.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		3		*2*	*2*		*2*	*1*	*3*

Rate styles of ministry as you believe would be best suited for your congregation (keep in mind membership, attendance and budget). 1 is first choice, 2 is second choice, 3 is third choice, and 4 is forth choice.

_*1*__ Single Church Appointment(even with part time minister)

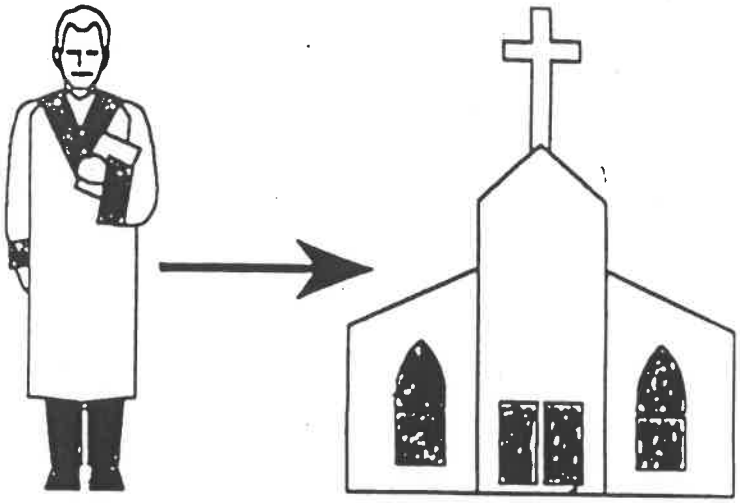
_*2*__ Charge Appointment (churches sharing ministerial needs only)

_*4*__ Cooperative Parish, (share in office & related ministries)

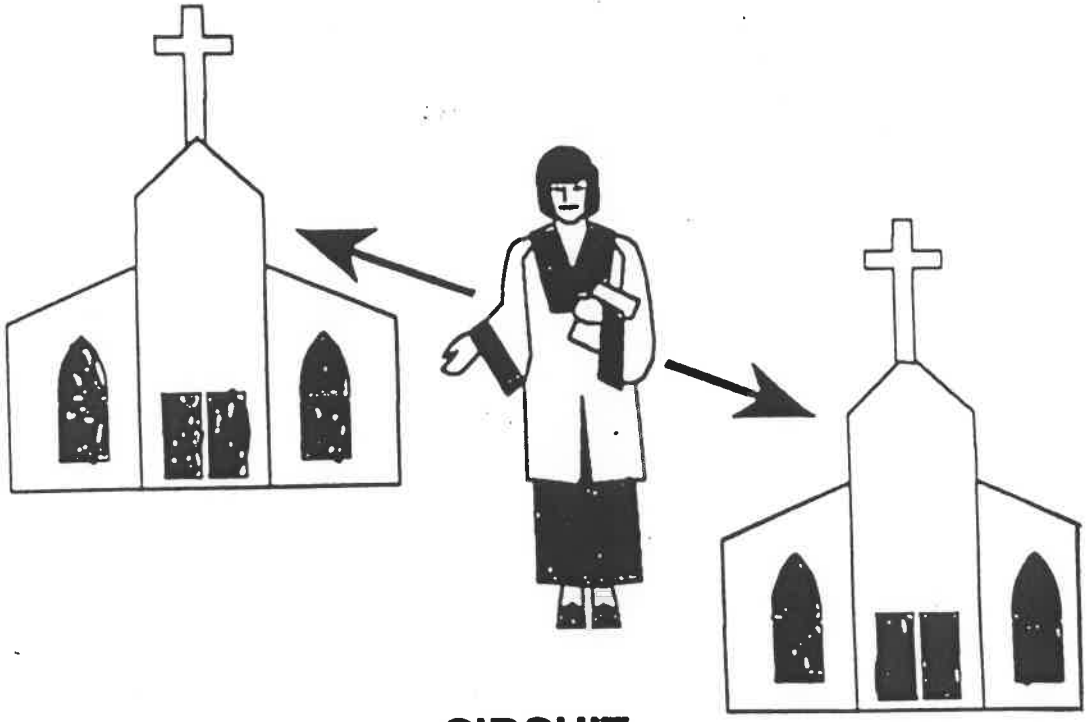
_*3*__ Yoked Cooperative Parish (yoked by ministerial staff & work areas)

APPENDIX 8

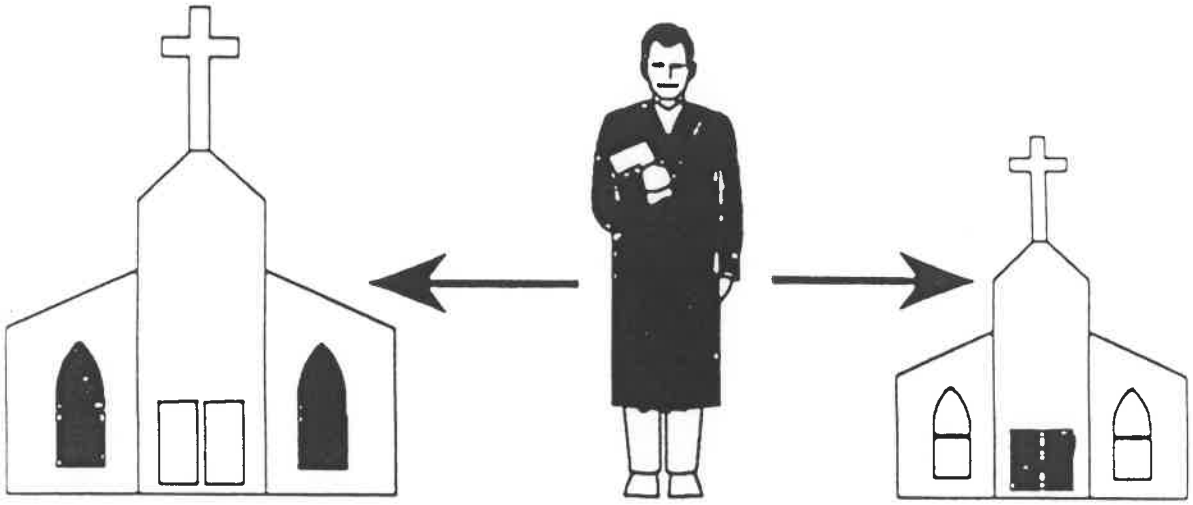
OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES



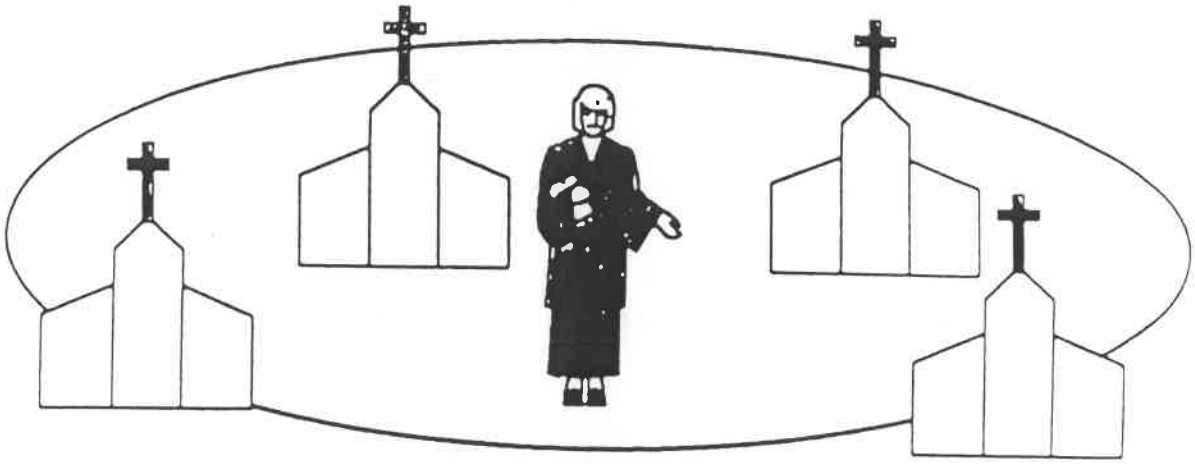
STATION



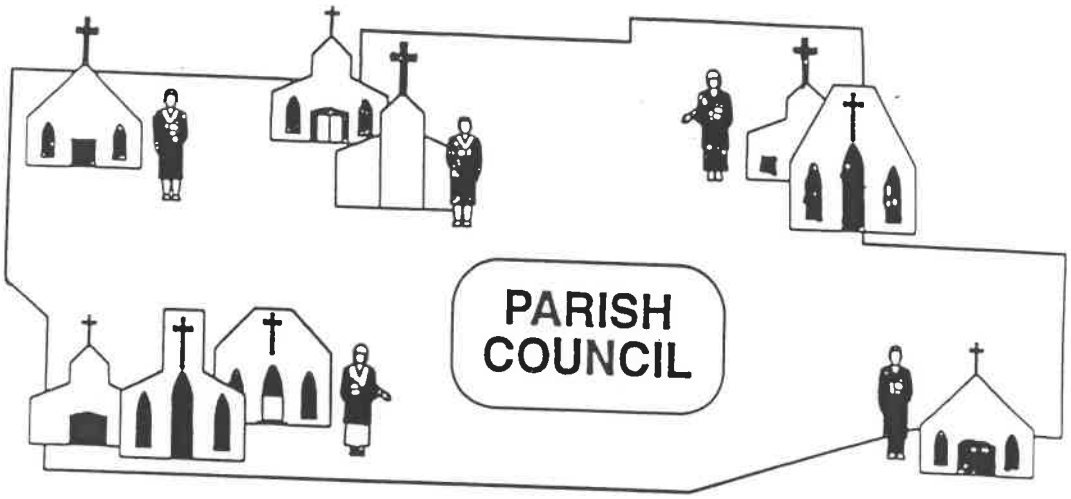
CIRCUIT



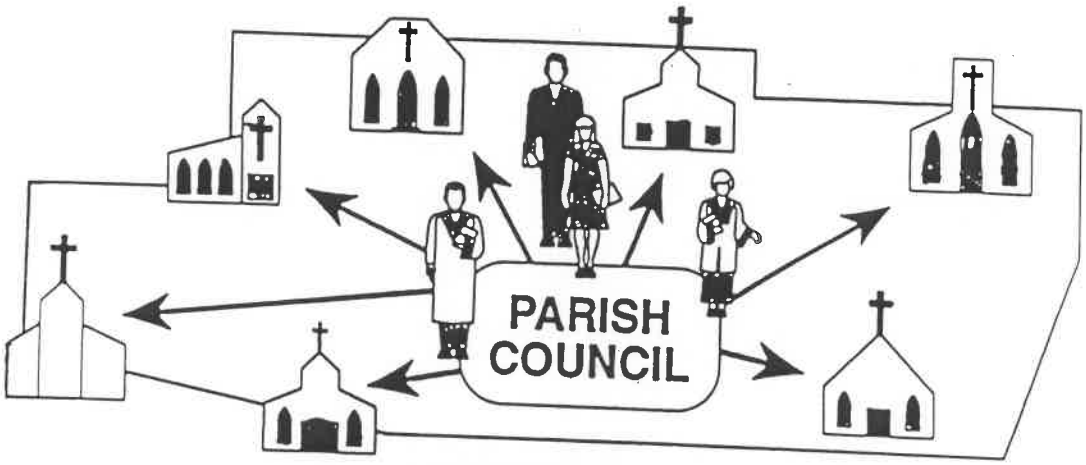
EXTENDED MINISTRY



ENLARGED CHARGE

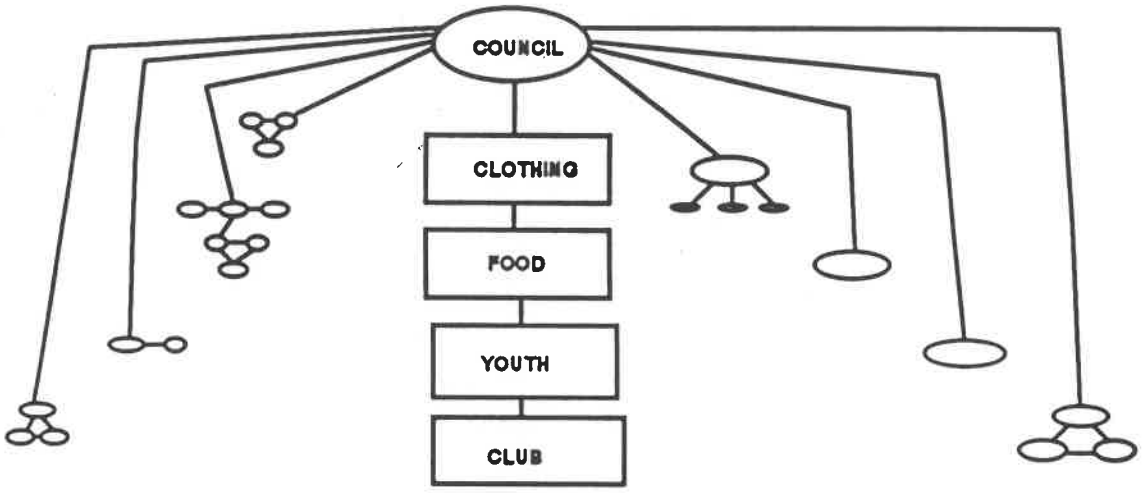


MULTIPLE CHARGE PARISH

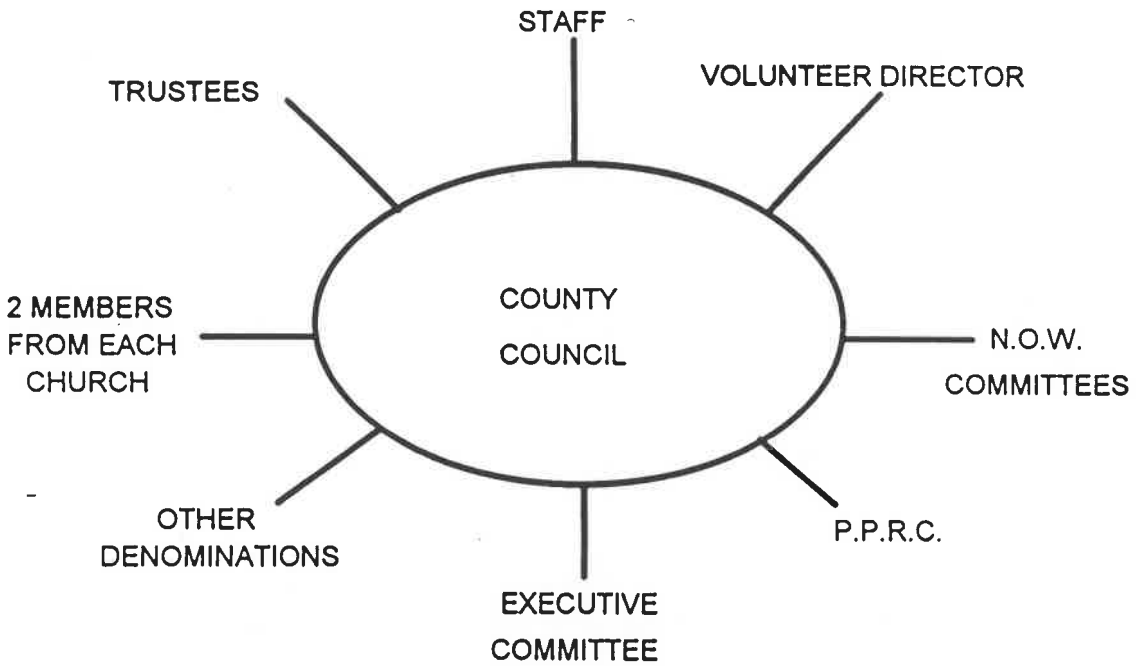


LARGER PARISH (YOKED PARISH)

MEIGS COUNTY COOPERATIVE

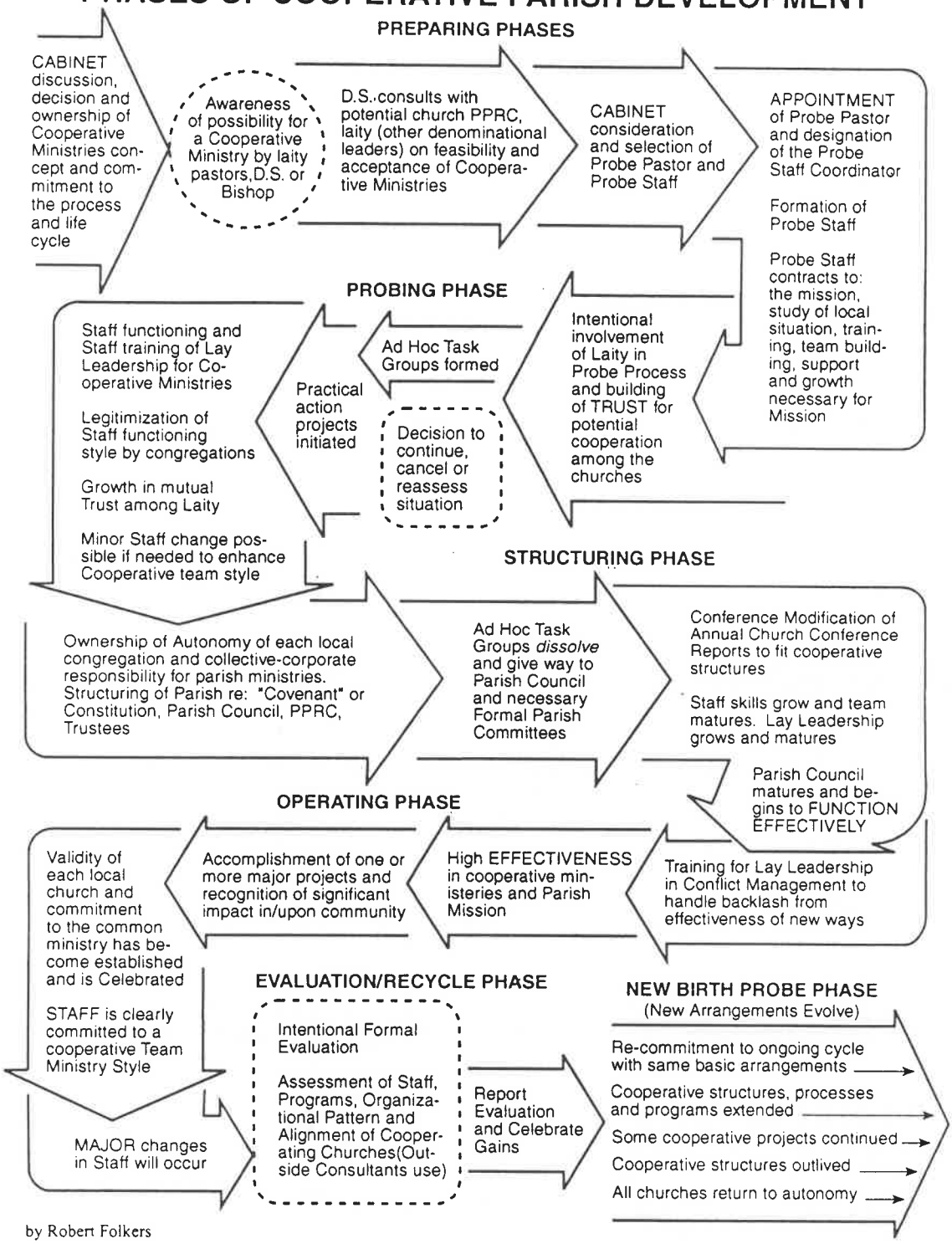


23 CHURCHES with 8 Ministers ... 3 OTHER DENOMINATIONS



SET UP WITH COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE; nutrition for families
SET UP WITH OHIO UNIVERSITY; budget counseling

PHASES OF COOPERATIVE PARISH DEVELOPMENT


PREPARING PHASES
CABINET discussion, decision and ownership of Cooperative Ministries concept and commitment to the process and life cycle
Awareness of possibility for a Cooperative Ministry by laity pastors, D.S. or Bishop
D.S. consults with potential church PPRC, laity (other denominational leaders) on feasibility and acceptance of Cooperative Ministries
CABINET consideration and selection of Probe Pastor and Probe Staff
APPOINTMENT of Probe Pastor and designation of the Probe Staff Coordinator
Formation of Probe Staff
Probe Staff contracts to: the mission, study of local situation, training, team building, support and growth necessary for Mission
PROBING PHASE
Staff functioning and Staff training of Lay Leadership for Cooperative Ministries
Legitimization of Staff functioning style by congregations
Growth in mutual Trust among Laity
Minor Staff change possible if needed to enhance Cooperative team style
Ad Hoc Task Groups formed
Practical action projects initiated
Decision to continue, cancel or reassess situation
Intentional involvement of Laity in Probe Process and building of TRUST for potential cooperation among the churches
STRUCTURING PHASE
Ownership of Autonomy of each local congregation and collective-corporate responsibility for parish ministries. Structuring of Parish re: "Covenant" or Constitution, Parish Council, PPRC, Trustees
Ad Hoc Task Groups dissolve and give way to Parish Council and necessary Formal Parish Committees
Conference Modification of Annual Church Conference Reports to fit cooperative structures
Staff skills grow and team matures. Lay Leadership grows and matures
Parish Council matures and begins to FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY
OPERATING PHASE
Validity of each local church and commitment to the common ministry has become established and is Celebrated
STAFF is clearly committed to a cooperative Team Ministry Style
Accomplishment of one or more major projects and recognition of significant impact in/upon community
High EFFECTIVENESS in cooperative ministeries and Parish Mission
Training for Lay Leadership in Conflict Management to handle backlash from effectiveness of new ways
EVALUATION/RECYCLE PHASE
MAJOR changes in Staff will occur
Intentional Formal Evaluation
Assessment of Staff, Programs, Organizational Pattern and Alignment of Cooperating Churches(Outside Consultants use)
Report Evaluation and Celebrate Gains
NEW BIRTH PROBE PHASE
(New Arrangements Evolve)
Re-commitment to ongoing cycle with same basic arrangements
Cooperative structures, processes and programs extended
Some cooperative projects continued
Cooperative structures outlived
All churches return to autonomy

by Robert Folkers

APPENDIX 9

SERMON

WE ARE ONE IN SALVATION **Romans 15:5-13**

I. There were two students attending the same college. One was being honored for receiving the highest grades in the graduating class. This man was blind, and he insisted that half of this honor should go to another man. They became friends when a sighted man helped him find his way out of a stairwell. His sighted friend also had a handicap, he was armless. The blind man carried their books while the armless man guided them to classes and read what the professor wrote on the board.

Each of these students was ***compensated by the others ability*** and ***not by the lack of it.***

II. Cooperation is the bases for great things happening.

A. Unity comes from cooperation

1. We keep our thoughts as one
2. We keep to a common cause
3. When God is bases for cooperation/unity is strong
4. When we think alike we are closer and united in strength

B. Acceptance is KEY to Unity

1. Cannot work as team if we think as many or individual
   a. We can become as one with Christ, and not be the church
   b. We can become as one in the church and see strength
2. Acceptance of others come when we are accepted
   a. We become a part of a family when we are accepted by the family
   b. We can accept others when we are accepted by others

C. Church is where we should live in unity/cooperation

1. We are many people, churches, & communities
   a. We are called to serve one God, Savior, & Holy Spirit
   b. We are to be of one accord, one faith, one ***HOPE***

2. A Yoked Parish ministry calls us to be united
   a. Our work areas, committees, & Ministries will be a united effort
   b. If we are one people, serving one God & serving a universal church, why do we pull ourselves a part & act like the other church(even when same denom) is in competition with us

3. Yoked Parish Cooperative Ministry Staff
   a. Looks a lot like a group of charges
   b. Ministers & staff appointed to Parish
   c. Use their talents to assign duties & work areas

D. The Ministry appointments & Laity Involvement

1. Senior Pastor
   a. Full Time position
   b. Mentor & Administrator for parish staff
   c. Assignment of congregation responsibility

2. Associate Pastor
   a. Student Pastor or Local Pastor
   b. Being mentored & nurtured
   c. Assigned local congregation & work responsibilities

*D.*3. Laity Staff

a. Works as staff from local church
b. Could be assigned office work/ youth ministry
c. Not an itinerant position / ordained

III. Laity involvement is critical. The church is the ministry of the people and the people need to be responsible for the ministry of their church and parish. A yoked ministry calls us to be good stewards of our ministry, time and personnel.

It takes the unity of God's family to be in a yoked parish. Each church/ congregation is not on their own. You are closely connected to other churches, congregations and people.

that

You might have come to your faith journey for different reasons, but your journey is not a single person's experience. The church is on that same journey and it cannot do it alone. The denomination is on that same journey and it cannot do it alone.

IV. During the Civil War, a story is told about a time when the Northern Army and the Southern Army faced each other across the Potomic River. Instead of fighting each other with guns; that day they fought songs.

First the North played & sang a patriotic song -- then the South. This continued throughout the day. When evening was almost upon them the North Army played ***Home Sweet Home***. The competition ended as the South joined in. Underneath all their differences they were seeking the same thing. A stable home, a place safe & secure for their family. A place they could experience ***love & God***

The church often finds itself in this same situation. We try to keep our church separated from other churches and denominations. Are we really serving God or our own self interest?

We need to seek God's guidance as we pray for and work within the body of Christ. We need to come together in our faith and our journey as we worship the Lord.

Let us pray that we will not keep the work & salvation of our Lord confined by our short-sightedness. Let us pray

our eyes will be open as we find ourselves in ministry.